

## A Year of Crisis: Action in Hope

SOPHIA ARNOLD

Junior, Kutztown Area High School, Kutztown, PA

Philosophy is the ability to think about thinking. I often find myself taking this a bit too far, almost perseverating and restating my thoughts ceaselessly, like an endless monologue in my head. Being able to take apart my own thinking, and look at the world overall, is a peaceful release. Finding hope in that mess, is a whole different thing. Hope can be elusive

Finding hope in that mess, is a whole different thing. Hope can be elusive at times, especially these times.

---

at times, especially these times. In the poem *"Hope" is the thing with feathers* by Emily Dickinson, the author addresses hope as a little bird, which is a complex way of seeing it. Often, we want to take big ideas and inspiring forces, and turn them into beautiful delicate metaphors, like a sweet bird, or a flower. In my mind, that demeans the concept being described, and makes it seem small in the large scale of life. The bird isn't strong, it's a gentle creature, not a wild beast. The bird is seen as naive at first, a sweet tune in each person's soul. Yet, in the face of the wind, it's strong and pushes through with determination. Being a hopeful person

doesn't make you weak, because when things get difficult, you use hope to get you through. When I read the poem at first, I was mad at the representation of hope as a small bird. Then I realized that the bird making it through the storm is what makes it strong. People draw on hope to survive, to push through the storm. Hope is not just a means to an end, but something to engage with and work towards.

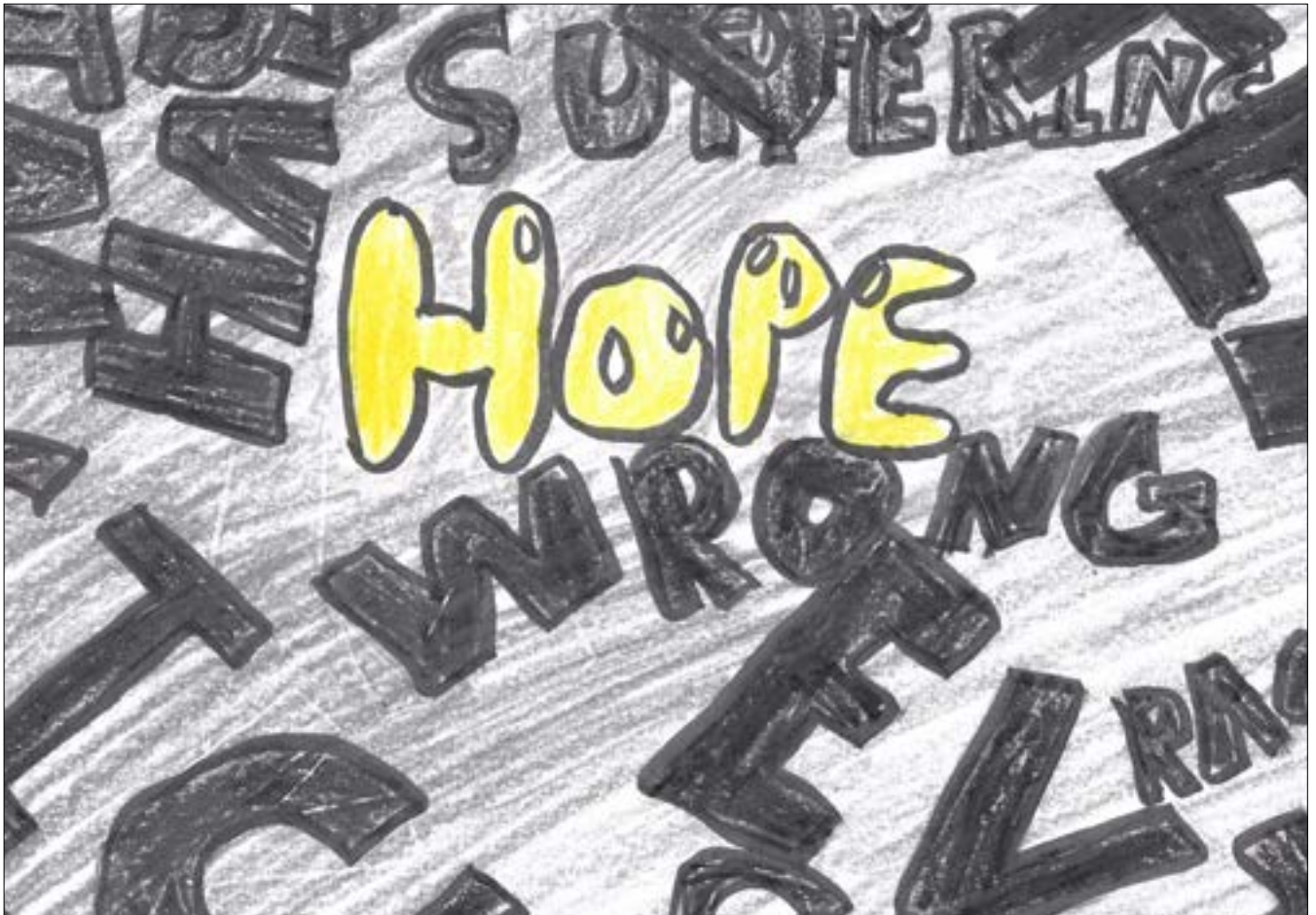
In the familiar Greek Myth of Pandora's box, the box holds all the evil in the world, such as pain, terror, disease, greed, and envy. Pandora is given the box as a gift, told not to open it, but opens it anyway out of curiosity. By the time she gets the box to close, only hope stays inside. It's an interesting story, and a great way to take apart ideas like hope. I believe that if the horrors of the box are left to roam free, while the hope remains in the box, that would mean that we have an unlimited access to pain and fear, but that humanity is ever reaching for hope. It is always present in the box, but we never fully obtain it. A pessimistic view would be that Pandora failed to let Hope out as well. It's easy to assume that she's just an overly curious woman who sorely messed up. An alternate perspective is that hope is left in the box as something to aspire to not to possess, a practice and a difficult lesson to learn. Perhaps Pandora may have left hope on purpose, to make it something to work for.

Hope is a difficult thing to maintain, and we never fully reach it, but hope isn't something simply to collect. To have unbounded hope in something is beautiful but can lead

to a false sense of security. Hopefulness must be balanced out, like anything in life, too much can be a problem. Most people's issue would be not having enough of it, or not engaging with hope. Systems are constantly collapsing, governments lying, corruption grows, Pandemic's hit and trust is revoked. Hope has meaning in action and thought, like creating a club or sharing ideas in a purposeful way. Exercising hope in life can be a challenging task, but it's always necessary. Reaching for hope in yourself, hope in others, and hope in the world around you are what gives hope meaning.

### Bibliography

- Almond, Brenda. *Exploring Philosophy, the Philosophical Quest*, 2nd edition. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- D'Aulaires, Edgar. *D'Aulaires Book of Greek Myths*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press, 2003.
- Dickinson, Emily. "Hope" is the thing with feathers. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1983. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42889/hope-is-the-thing-with-feathers-314>.
- Mittleman, Alan. *Hope in a Democratic Age*. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Newman, Jeffrey. "Hannah Arendt: Radical Evil, Radical Hope." *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 60-71.



ELLA SMITS, Fifth-grade student,  
Magnolia Elementary School, Seattle, WA