Finding Blue Skies

By: Riley Moon

Days are long and times are rough,

fending just to have enough.

Feel so trapped inside this box,

all to do is watch the clock.

Walking in the dark alone,

not knowing if we’ll make it home.

Days will pass, no sense of time,

hills of endless uphill climbs.

Isolation and despair,

how much longer can we bare?

Fear runs rampant through the town,

lungs so full that we could drown.

No work, fun, or place to go,

markets take a daunting blow.

Took for granted what we knew

now a life so glum, so blue.

But with this day comes strength of mind,

some lovely peace and quiet time.

The soul can blossom into spring,

the mind can heal, reflect and sing.

The skies will fade from gray to blue,

water so clear you can see right through.

Not much to do but go outside,

and run and swing and play and hide.

A world that’s always “go go go”

can pause and rest and travel slow.

With time to hold your family tight,

to laugh with them all day and night.

With this war comes devastation,

we must unite as one nation.

We have to hold our heads up high

and smile through the painful cry.

 Reflection and Analysis

In a time of such devastation and uncertainty, with our nation facing an invisible war, life as we once knew it just three weeks ago is long gone, yet our future remains too far into the distance to see. Change can come in many forms, but in this case, it was an abrupt change, like a tornado coming out of nowhere spiraling toward us, and the way of life we had known for so long was uprooted and carried away in just a matter of moments. Although change can be difficult, cause uncertainty and make us feel out of control, it can also lead to growth, adaptation, and even new opportunities. This poem is about the changing times during the current world pandemic and how, with a positive and open mind, the light can always be found in even the darkest of times.

Receiving an official email from The University of Georgia saying that class had been canceled for the rest of the semester and were being moved to online hit me hard. At that moment, as I began to understand the seriousness and magnitude of this outrageous pandemic, I was at a loss of words and tears began rolling down my face. I was distraught that my freshman year had been ripped away from me. All of the memories and future plans laid heavily on my heart as I cleared out my dorm room and headed back to Marietta to spend the rest of my freshman year at home. During my first week at home, I was lethargic and miserable and didn’t have the energy to do anything. I was upset that I could not leave my house or spend time with my friends. Watching restaurants close, seeing people out of work, grasping how high our unemployment would rise, and realizing that people would soon not be able to pay their rent or buy food, I was hit with the magnitude of this crisis. As I saw the numbers increase every day for those infected with the virus, and the daily deaths increase as well, I grieved watching people who were unable to say goodbye to their loved ones or comfort them in their last hours. I realized that this pandemic could not be stopped. I was worried and unsettled that I had brought this illness back from New York, where I had unfortunately gone on spring break, to my father who has lung issues. It makes you feel like you are in the eye of the tornado. Spinning out of control with no end in sight. I began to feel a sense of complete helplessness. I sat on the couch for days pouting and feeling sorry for myself, away from school, locked up in the house with nothing to do.

Scrolling through social media, I saw many posts made to lift spirits and spread positivity in these trying times. I saw inspiring posts about how the Chinese were seeing blue skies for the first time in decades after shutting down factories. I read stories about people making lunches for healthcare staff and underprivileged students who were no longer receiving lunches at school, who otherwise would not be fed. There were stories after stories about our country coming together to help others in need and even some really funny posts to make us laugh, like single toilet paper sheets being sold on eBay and dogs who were the happiest because of all the walks and attention they were getting. I was touched to see that people could find a little humor and happiness to help themselves and others persevere through this dark time. After being inspired by others, it made me think about some of the positive things that could come out of this tragedy and my spirits were lifted a little. I decided eventually that I had become bored with being bored all day and started to look at the situation in a different way. I knew I could not change the way things were, so I have started to invest in my life and happiness, given the circumstances. In these hard and trying times, I have started to find joy in the little things that have always been right in front of me in which I normally would have taken for granted: my family, my dogs, the extra time for inward reflection, the outside world. With all of this change, the past two weeks have taught me how to adapt to my surroundings and make my life work without the usual means. Things I love to do like working out at the gym were no longer an option, so I came up with a way to work out at home and have taken long walks with my family and dogs. I used to watch Netflix when I had some free time, but now I have found joy in reading and doing crossword puzzles, making my brain think and grow. Instead of shopping for clothes and going to stores, I am organizing the ones I already have, to make my life more orderly. Because we can no longer go to restaurants, I have decided to go online and look up recipes; I have found a passion in cooking meals for my family. This extra time, that in the beginning, I was dreading, has given me time to better myself.  I have time to reflect on my character and focus on my core values. I have time to commit to a healthier and more active lifestyle. I have had time to realize how much I missed my family and how I took the last few of my eighteen years at home for granted. This has presented me with a second chance to soak up every drop of happiness my family brings to me. The mind is a powerful thing and a few alterations in your mindset can make all the difference in life.

The poem as a whole reflects my shifting viewpoint on the situation at hand. The negativity is truly reflected in the first sixteen lines of the poem. This half of the poem reflects my thoughts when I arrived home after my fun-filled spring break with my three best friends and I began feeling intensely lonely and discouraged. The beginning lines are dark and negative in meaning, speaking of death, my sense of fear, being alone and feeling hopeless and are used to produce a melancholic tone. Although this was my mood at the time, it is only half of the poem. The second half of the poem sees the beauty and hope that comes out of chaos and despair with a change in mindset. It speaks of the blue skies and inner reflection and being united to help one another. It allows us to slow down and spend time with our loved ones and get in touch with nature. The second half of the poem counts our blessings and forces us to see what’s really meaningful in our lives. Amongst the chaos of this crisis, I have made a conscious choice to persevere and maintain a positive outlook. If we count our blessings instead of dwelling on the negatives, life becomes more meaningful and enjoyable. The poem begins with all of the negatives surrounding the crisis such as people dying, not being able to leave their homes, fear itself, and the stock market crashing. Then, halfway through, it shifts to all of the beautiful things that can evolve from this crisis and shine through, like the skies clearing, slowing down, spending time with family, personal growth and inner reflection and unity and hope this brings to our nation.

The first half of the poem is written in a meter containing a seven-syllabic pattern whereas, after the “But”, the second half shifts to an eight-syllabic pattern. This was done to show a contrast between the two sides and to give the more positive, second half greater importance. This makes the shift abrupt and noticeable as the whole rhythm is different, even giving it a different, more upbeat and cheerful mood in direct contrast to the depressing glum tone previously present. In doing this, the poem even appears bulkier and more lengthy in the second half representing that it has more significance and means more to me as the writer.

I believe that everything can be worked for the good and that we will come out of this terrible pandemic changed and renewed. This can lead us to be transformed personally, mentally, physically, spiritually as well as nationally. I believe, because of this epidemic, we will become more unified. This has forced us to look within to see the important things in life; it has been an eye-opener for environmental needs and has brought us together.  This experience has taught me to accept and embrace change and look beyond what I can see. I have learned that things aren’t always as dark as they seem. There are always clear skies above the dark grey clouds, and if you look closely enough and gaze through a different lens or use your imagination, the blue might even shine through.