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2017 'Why Humanities?' Finalist: The Humanities Mean Courage

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Why Humanities? Contest

Finalist 2017

The Humanities Mean Courage

Alex-Andre Ungurenaso

The humanities are the paradox of our existence,
The pains and joys of passion's enticing blaze.
It's not finding the answer to happiness,
Or the meaning of life, or the secrets of the universe,

But instead coming upon more questions,
Simple and confusing, unifying and polarizing,
To the point where you're sixteen and
You're going through an existential crisis

And you want to run away to Italy
And you want to be a bohemian
And you want to live with the hippies in the forest
But you know better than that.

It's the disappointment in your parents' voice, (Mhm)
The same old lectures and questions (Yup)
About employment, about 'real life' (Bleh)
And how you'll end up living on the streets; (Good!)

Or their pride in knowing that you'll pursue the life
That they never had the courage to,
So they hug you without a word because they know
The hope that they had turned their backs on in their youth

And they know it'll be confusing
And they know it'll be soul-crushing
And they know it'll be awe-inspiring
But you know better than giving up.

It's already having the required texts for class
Before they're even announced,
Because trips to the local Chapters
Are the reason why your wallet's always empty

When you catch the fragrance of an old book,
You caress each sun and time-worn page,
Swallow every word as your eyes gleam with excitement
Even though your rent's due tomorrow

And your bookshelf's about to give out
And your back aches from carrying your bag
And your bookmark fell out again
But you know better than going digital.

It's not just a study, or a science,
Or a subject, or an art,
Or a scope, or an excuse;
It's a lifestyle that we shape with our own hands

Making what we want out of it,
Giving it the meanings we want
Despite what others might think,
Accepting that we'll never be right

And that we know nothing
And that the world's not black and white
And that truth is relative
But we know better than calling it 'surrender.'