



Aviator News



HAWTHORNE, CA

HAWTHORNE MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY

SEMESTER I. ISSUE 3. DECEMBER 2013/JANUARY 2014

What Do Our Teachers Think About Finals?

—KIMBERLY RIVERA—

These finals can either make a positive impact on students' grades or pull them down negatively.

Finals are closer than you think. HMSA will be having its semester 1 finals over a period of three days from Wednesday, January 15 to Friday, January 17. During those three days, all students will be released from school at 12:15 p.m.

What are finals? Finals are examinations that each class holds at the end of a four-month period in order to assess what students learned over the semester. The final exams are the last grades in the students' final grades before the release of first semester report cards approximately a week later. Finals will be evenly spread out over a period of three days. Day one of the finals will consist of testing for periods 1 and 2, day two will be for periods 3 and 4, and day three will be for periods 5 and 6. All students have their own perspectives on finals, but what do some of our teachers think about finals?

Each teacher chose to make his or her final worth a certain percentage, with different purposes and objectives in mind. Eleventh grade art teacher Ms. Kang says, "[her Final is worth] approximately 15% [because] art project grades are the main focus." When creating her final, she was focusing mainly on the "understanding of art concepts."

"I want the students to show overall understanding of new terms, but also use critical thinking skills to solve problems," she says.

Mr. Dura, who teaches health, entrepreneurship, and driver's ed, describes his final as "roughly 12-15% of the final grade."

"It's a culmination of what was taught during the semester and I need to see how well the students absorbed the material," he explains. Half of his final will concern the most recent unit, and the other half will be all of the prior units condensed into one.

Eleventh grade US History and AP US History teacher Mr. Highducheck says, "My final is worth 15% of the grade. I chose 15% because 10% is too low to have a significant impact on the grade at this point and students would not take it seriously, and 20% made it possible for kids to goof off most of the semester and not get the best test grades and then boost their grade with a really good score." His final will have the same amount of information from each chapter in order to create an effective review of the entire se-

mester.

Algebra I and II teacher Mrs. Latigay says, "The grade set-up is the same for the entire Math department and the final test is worth 30%." She also explains what her main focus is when it comes to creating her final: "I believe that one lesson is equally important as the next so in the final test I always include items from as many lessons as possible. Students relate to lessons in different manners, maybe wholly understanding Lesson A but not quite Lesson B, so having a wide range of questions will sort of average [out] their chances of getting a decent grade. I also choose problems that will display not only students' level of understanding but more their level of mastery of the lessons."

Each teacher has his or her reasons for formatting his or her final in a certain way. Ms. Kang chose to make her final consist of multiple choice questions in order to make it "easier to grade" in the limited time she has before report cards are released.

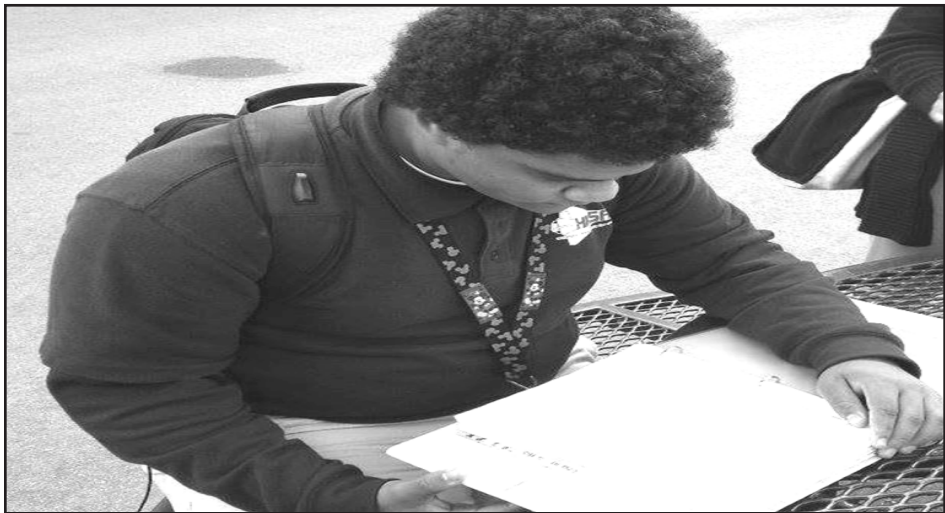
"I use multiple choice because the questions and responses form a cognitive idea and helps the student remember what I want them to remember when they leave my class," says Mr. Dura.

Mr. Highducheck says, "Ideally, I think a final should cover multiple choice and essay questions, but the reality is that we have to have grades ready right after finals and that does not give me enough time to correct the essays; so for that reason, I think finals should only be multiple choice."

Mrs. Latigay believes multiple choice tests are helpful, as long as teachers "ingrain in their students that multiple choice is not guessing." "Students should be given as many ways as possible to show what they have learned so instead of a pure multiple choice or a pure free response, a mixture of both is always better," Mrs. Latigay believes.

These finals can either make a positive impact on students' grades or pull them down negatively. It all depends on how much work each student puts into their preparation for each of their finals.

To all students: study hard, be positive and most importantly, get enough sleep. Good luck to everyone on their finals! Go Aviators!



Adam S., senior, studying for finals.

How to Prepare for Final Exams

—BRYANA CARRILLO & KARLA GUARDADO—

The dates for final exams are getting closer and it's the perfect time to start preparing. Here are some tips to keep in mind when preparing.

- * Don't procrastinate
- * Go to tutoring
- * Ask your teachers for help; DON'T BE SHY!
- * Study by doing:
- * Practice problems
- * Read the textbook
- * Google is your best friend! (but NOT for homework). Google videos such as those on www.khanacademy.org
- * Go to sleep early
- * Don't cram the night before; it will only make you sleepy the next day
- * Eat a good breakfast to keep you awake throughout the day

Finals seem scarier than they actually are. As long as you study hard and use what resources you have, they'll be a piece of cake.

The Holiday Mall

—BRANDON AZUOMA & MICHAEL SALAZAR—

This winter, HMSA held its second Holiday Mall, run by Mr. Dura and his Entrepreneurship class, in the school's cafeteria. During this event the students researched certain items that would give them huge profits and grab the attention of their fellow peers. The students had the opportunity to enhance their business skills by accumulating everything they learned in class. Senior Chijioke Akunwafo displayed his wares: "The items we are selling include pelon, chocolate, gum and Rockaleta." He explained, "It's all supply and demand; this says that candy will sell more and cheap." When asked how he thinks the Holiday Mall will help benefit his entrepreneurship later in life he said, "It will help me gain experience in buying low and

selling high!"

Senior Sergio Nevarez was selling some technology gear because he wants "to make some money." He thinks the Holiday Mall "will give me the skills to be a leader in life, and it will teach me to manage a store in real life."

Senior Phebe Boye was selling jewelry. She thinks that that the Holiday Mall "will help me manage my money and teach me how to promote my business and all of that good stuff."

Overall, the Holiday Mall event enjoyed plenty of success with many students filling up the cafeteria and even certain booths selling out. The salespeople at the event had plenty of fun and gained experience about business and skills that would be useful in their futures.

New Year's Resolutions

—BRYANA CARRILLO & KARLA GUARDADO—

Freshmen:

"My New Year's resolution is to do better second semester so I can rejoin ASB."

—Melanie Cervantes

Sophomores:

"My New Year's resolution is to do everything I can to start acting again!"

—Ajaratu Hamid

"My New Year's resolution is to not procrastinate on homework and school assignments and go to sleep early."

—Leslie Gonzalez

"To play more piano."

—Mutiaru Sukantri

Juniors:

"My New Year's resolution is to get at least all B's next semester and all A's senior year."

—Erick Ballesteros

"My New Year's resolution is to live a more fit and productive lifestyle."

—Kimberly Ngo

"My New Year's resolution is to stop being so hesitant in different situations and to just woman up and do it."

—Nishrat Khan

"Get rid of procrastination and create time to work-out."

—Ryan Aquinde

Seniors:

"This year I don't have a New Year's resolution because I want to see what surprises come."

—Khali Begum

"My New Year's resolution is to get better with relationships because lately I've just been a horrible boyfriend. I perhaps need to hang out with more of my gay friends because gay boyfriends are a tad dramatic sometimes. Is it me who doesn't know how to make the relationship actually work or have I just not found the right guy yet? OMG! Help me!"

—Marc Ninapaytan

"To get out of my comfort zone, stay happy, and maybe get a job during the summer."

—Lucy Herrera

"My New Year's resolutions is to make a new friend every month and learn a new language."

—Mykayla Richards



Q&A with the Aviators Soccer Teams:

–ANTHUAN CRUZ–

Boys’ Soccer

This season, the boys’ soccer team is adjusting to their new roster. They have two wins, but are learning more from each game. The boys play hard every time down the field and share a passion for their game. I was able to catch an interview with their coach, Mr. Launius.

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Anthuan Cruz (AC): What do you like most about your team?

Mr. Launius (ML): I like how the team has passion for the sport and never gives up.

AC: What are your goals you hope to accomplish by the end of the season?

ML: Our goal is to make the playoffs this year.

AC: What do you hope your team will learn from this experience?

ML: I hope they will learn discipline and teamwork within the framework of the game and transfer that knowledge to real-life experiences.

AC: What do you love about coaching?

ML: Winning. [Anthuan’s note: Love the honesty by the way, Mr. Launius.]

...

In addition to their coach, I interviewed the goalie, sophomore Josh Chacon. His position relies on lots of chemistry between him and his fellow defenders, so he knows where the team strives and where they need improvement.

Stretch Marks Project

“The goal of taking the students out of their comfort zones and into the community as a real world application is central to Common Core.”

–Ms. Enger

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Essay written by Raymond Becerra, sophomore.

Coach Raymond!

Coach Raymond! It sounds kind of funny to me when little children call me “Coach,” because I never experienced coaching a soccer team. There are many interesting things about being a coach that I could keep to myself, but I want to share my first time experience coaching a soccer team. Maybe, when I share my experience to people, they might recommend being a coach for little kids.

I didn’t want to become a soccer coach, but my dad kept on telling me that the soccer region needed coaches. Since my dad was coaching three teams, I said to myself, “Why not? I should coach a team and they also would give me community service hours.” So I took my dad’s offer, and he signed me up. Then as soon as my dad signed me up, I had to take a coaching test to become a legit coach. The test was really long and seemed like a waste of time, but I ended up passing it. Then a couple of days went by, and I had my first coach meeting. In this coach meeting I picked up the roster of my soccer team. Then, I arranged a meeting to get to know the kids and talk to the parents a little about myself and things that parents have to do, such as who brings the snacks, who is the team mom, and how to make sure their sons are ready for soccer. Then after the meeting, I said to myself, “I

can do this. No pressure.” The first day of practice, I noticed that the boys were really into the sport. I really enjoyed their efforts to try to learn something about the sport and try to improve from their mistakes. I became really into coaching kids; I really enjoyed teaching them soccer. It made me realize that it’s not bad trying new things. I looked forward coaching the boys!

The first game of the season was about to start. My team was very energetic and excited. Right before the game was about to start, we huddled up and put our hands together and screamed “Red Hot Chili Peppers!” (Our team name.) The game was very intense. My boys were battling from one side of the field to the other just trying to score a goal or defend their goal. The game was nail-biting because the score was tied, 2-2. Then the last seconds of the game, my boys scored two amazing goals. The game ended, and the boys were jumping around because we won. The boys played well, but as a coach, I have to spot things that your team has to improve on. So next soccer practice we worked on some errors that they can learn to avoid next time when they played against another team.

Coaching a bunch of young children was extremely funny and amusing. They told funny typical jokes that a normal nine- or ten-year-old tells. Sometimes, when they

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AC: What do you want your team to improve on this season?

Joshua Chacon (JC): Listening and trusting – team work. There are moments in the game where we play as strangers when we need to play like a family.

AC: As goalie, you don’t get to interact with the rest of the team as much. How do you handle the pressure of having to guard the goal?

JC: I think of the goal as my “house” in a way. Why would I let someone or something enter my house that is unwanted?

AC: What do you enjoy about playing your game?

JC: The little moments. As a goalie, I can see the whole game in progress and there are moments in the game where I keep in my head. It can be as simple as a well-done juke or an amazing attempt to score a goal.

AC: How have you been able to balance education and extracurricular activities as an HMSA student?

JC: I just have two different mind sets. When I’m in student mode, the only thing I care about is getting that A, or at least trying to get that A. When I play soccer, the only thing I care about is to make sure my team is better than the other.

Girls’ Soccer

The girls’ soccer team has had a great start in the season, being undefeated so far. Their remarkable defense prevents the opposing team from scoring. Their true passion for the sport drives them, and we hope to that their momentum continues their streak. Mr. Kircher, their coach, is also very pleased with their performance.

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AC: What or who has been the biggest factor contributing to the streak?

Mr. Kircher (MK): The team defense is definitely a factor, the way they don’t allow the other team to score. [Anthuan’s note: Mr. Severns also adds that they have a terrific athletic director.]

AC: What goal do you wish to accomplish by the end of the season?

MK: We want to make the plays and win the league.

AC: What do you hope the girls will take with them from this experience?

MK: I want them to be able to work together as a team and be able to play at a competitive level.

AC: What do you like most about coaching two different sports teams?

MK: I like having a variety of different athletes.

...

I interviewed three of the players of the team: twins Monica and Hilda Moreno, and Amber Burns, their “long lost triplet.” Though Hilda suffered a leg injury, she continues to provide support to her team.

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AC: How does it feel being undefeated in the season so far?

Amber Burns (AB): It feels great to be undefeated so far. The girls have put in a lot of work and effort to get where we’re at now. We hope to keep our undefeated streak for as long as we can.

AC: How will you and the team strive to keep the streak going?

AB: The girls and I will play our butts off in the upcoming games. We’ll just keep doing what we’ve been doing: work together, teach each other different techniques, and keep our spirits up.

AC: Who or what has been the biggest factor on or off the team?

AB: I’d say Hilda has been one of our big factors, because although she may be injured,

she still has that dedicated and upbeat spirit that brings the team together. Before her injury, she put in a great amount of effort in all our games and now continues guiding us to play better. She won’t be playing soon due to her injury, but she will still come out to the field with us to help and motivate the girls.

AC: How have you integrated the underclassmen into the team?

AB: I’ve helped integrate the underclassmen by encouraging them to try out for this sport, see if they’re interested in playing for the school’s team. I told them how joining any sport will be a great experience for them to enjoy.

AC: Does the opposing team ever get confused seeing you and Hilda play at the same time?

Monica Moreno: Yes. If they are interested, they ask me if I have a twin or someone who looks like me on the team. My response is based on my mood, but usually I say, “Yes and you might want to keep a better eye on her if I were you.”

AC: What is your expected recovery time and how do you plan on bouncing back?

Hilda Moreno: My expected recovery time might last another 2 to 3 weeks. I plan on practicing harder than ever before to be able to return and finish off the season strong.

AC: How do you feel about the team’s success so far?

Both: The girls have been magnificent and I am extremely proud of their success. I believe we deserve to feel like winners because of the communication on and off the field, the hard effort put during practices and games, and their courage. I hope they keep up the effort.

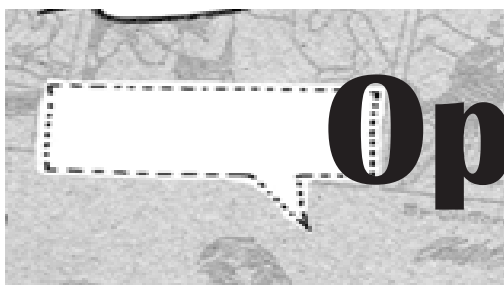
AC: Who has been the biggest factor on and off the team?

Both: Every girl has a significant asset on the team; we all work together as one. The biggest factors off the field would be Amber and our fans (our friends) because they find ways to gather up the girls to spend more time getting to know one another.

play soccer, they make funny mistakes, like when they are about to kick the ball and they miss the kick and just fall to the floor like Charlie Brown trying to kick the football. Then there are players that think they are the best in the world and think that they can score a lot of goals, but they still need to work on some things to become great soccer players. Then there are shy kids who wouldn’t talk with anyone, but it changed when I did a drill where they get to know each other better by calling out their names. Then the shy kids became really comfortable with their teammates and made a lot of friends.

Coaching was a really amazing first experience to me. Watching kids improve their soccer skills and becoming great

friends over the past weeks, and seeing the boys really enjoy the sport made me feel really happy and proud that I was helping the boys become great players and also helping them make friends. I really enjoyed becoming a coach. The real reason I became a coach was because I had to earn volunteer hours and my dad forced me, but I just became really in to it because I love teaching kids how to play this beautiful sport. I put the volunteering aside and just did it for the kids. It’s an amazing feeling becoming a coach; I would like to share this with everyone.



~Welcome to the DAX Side~

New Year's Resolutions and Determination

—DAX CAPANGPANGAN—

Many people love to think of the New Year as a new beginning for making resolutions, but only 46% are kept past six months (Statistic Brain). If people actually stuck to their New Year's resolutions, they'd help themselves.

Generally (and hopefully), New Year's resolutions are about bettering ourselves, whether it be kicking a bad habit, picking up a good one, or completing a goal, so obviously sticking and keeping to these resolutions WILL better ourselves. Motivation, the lack of which being the reason for many log entries, can actually be promoted by these New Year's resolutions. Once you finally complete your New Year's resolution, you can feel a sense of accomplishment and triumph because

you kept with it, even though no one was really forcing you.

However, the main problem is the lack of determination to keep the New Year's resolution going. One way to keep at your resolution is making your resolution something you really want to do or something you really want to improve about yourself. Another way to keep at your resolution is to have someone make sure you're keeping at it. It's a lot easier to stay motivated when someone is pestering you to keep doing it. It also helps to give yourself little rewards along the way for keeping it up.

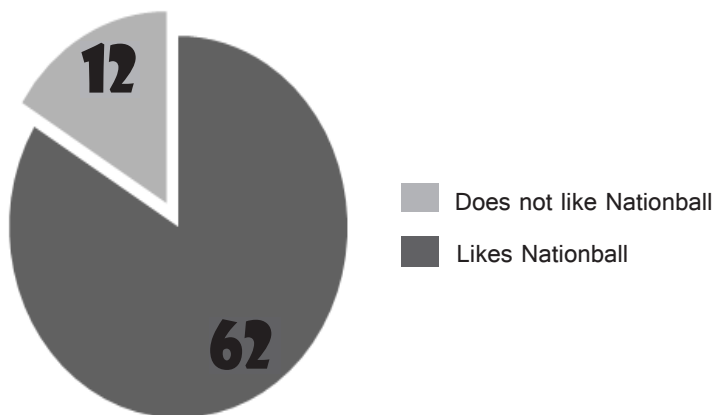
If everyone keeps up their New Year's resolutions, we will all be better people, so go, my army of "better people." Go and change the world! Hahahaha!



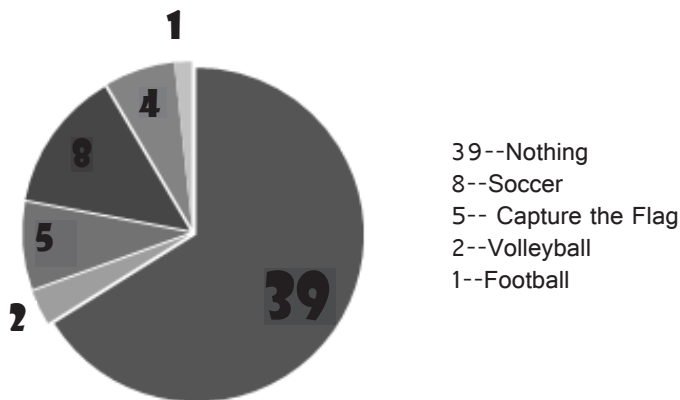
How Popular is Nationball?

—ABDULKARIM ALAMAD & MOHAMED RAKHA—

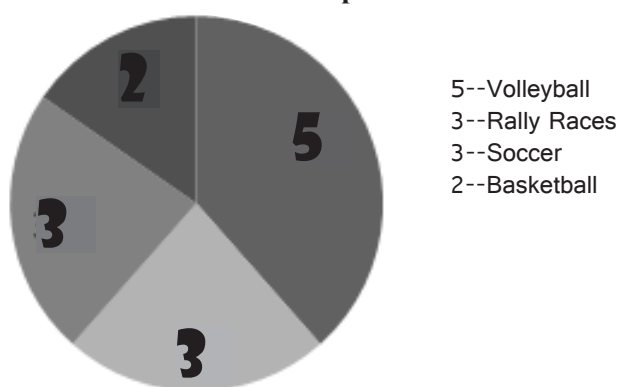
Students who like Nationball vs. Students who do not



Activities that students who like Nationball would like to add to it



Activities that students who do not like Nationball would like to replace it with



*The numbers inside each pie slice refer to the number of students who fall in a given category, not the percentage.

Why We Can't Remember What We Learn (and What to Do About It)

—ALBERT RIVERA—

One thing that students at HMSA get extremely happy about is Winter Break. Unfortunately, Winter Break comes with a price. After celebrating the holidays for two weeks, students come back to school and have to battle with finals. What makes it even worse is that all that the material that the students learned throughout the first semester magically disappeared during Winter Break. This problem doesn't only apply to breaks; this can happen over the course of a weekend, one day, or sometimes by the time you leave the class.

Most of the time, students blame the excessive amount of homework, lack of time, or misunderstanding of the material. Although sometimes those reasons contribute to a failure of memorization, there are certain precautions students can take in order to not have to suffer the utter disappointment of failing finals.

The most important thing to know is what goes on in our brain while we are learning and how it stores useful memories. An article from Harvard Medical School based on a study by Dr. Robert Stickgold conducted by explains that Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep (the time when people are in "deep sleep" and see dreams which cause the eyes to move) plays a critical role in the brain's ability to store new received knowledge. In the study, people who took intensive language courses had an increase in brain activity during the REM period. This led to the conclusion that when the brain transfers memories from the short term memory to the long term memory during REM sleep. However, REM sleep only occurs after 6-7 hours after falling asleep, and some students at HMSA barely get three hours of sleep.

Another important factor that ties in with sleep and memorization is concentration. The same study also found that people with less sleep were not as able to concentrate during lessons and

were unable to remember the information as efficiently as those who actually got a good night's sleep. Although some student might try to blame the excessive amount of homework they receive as the main reason why they couldn't sleep well, procrastination is also contributes to that factor. How to deal with procrastination will be dealt with later in another issue.

Aside from getting a good night's sleep, concentration can be improved in different numerous ways. An article published by Diablo Valley College explained that students' main obstacles to concentration are internal and external distractions. Externally, music, TV, and social media distract student from paying full attention. Internally, students sometimes become indifferent about the subjects they are learning and drift away into irrelevant thoughts. Sometimes students can bring themselves down with a lack of confidence for the subject they are learning. The best way to overcome this problem is by using repetition. After repeating the same exercises over and over again, students will begin to see the patterns and tricks they need to remember a formula or fixing a sentence with bad grammar. Additionally, after repeating something after so many times, it becomes hardwired into the brain.

Sherlock Holmes put it best when he said, "You see but you do not observe." Every day, people think they have seen all there is to see but that is an illusion. Take for example, the stairs in the Math and Science department (B Building). Every day, hundreds of kids walk up and down the stairs, but most likely, none of them knows how many steps there are on those stairs. Students don't usually see everything they need to see the first time around, but with more sleep, concentration and repetition, they will greatly improve their memory capacity and not have to stress out so much about finals.

Student Reactions from Nov. Issue:

Vishali Kapoor's *HMSA Alumni Spotlight*

"His [Abdul Zahid's] is like a voice of god to me because he has answered my questions...Abdul's advice helped me a lot to realize that with hard work, good things will come out of it."

- Gustavo Barrera, sophomore

Spirit Week and Nationball Articles

"I liked why you guys mentioned it [Spirit Week], because then other kids and parents could know that HMSA isn't only about homework and projects but also having some fun."

- Stacy Hernandez, sophomore

"I really liked...*Spirit Week Mania*, but I still think that you should have included how people in lunch detention felt about being unable to play and why they wanted to play so much."

- Nestor Sobotie, sophomore

Jesse Torres and Omar Amer's *Is Obamacare Obamafair?*

"The article was both funny and informational...it gave me views and information about what's going on in our world today, and it was still pretty fun. I really liked the political cartoon."

- Alondra Chaidez, sophomore

Citation for Capangpangan's article:

"New Years Resolution Statistics." Statistic Brain RSS. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Dec. 2013. <http://www.statisticbrain.com/new-years-resolution-statistics/>

Citation for Rivera's article:

"Sleep, Learning, and Memory." Healthy Sleep. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Jan. 2014. <http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep/learning-memory>



Will Grayson, Will Grayson by John Green and David Levithan
–JACQUELYN FLORES–

When you think of your name, has it ever occurred to you that there are other people in the world with the same name as you? That’s what happens to Will Grayson... and the other Will Grayson. While Will Grayson (Will #1) from Chicago, Illinois is hanging out with his friends on a Saturday night, Will Grayson (Will #2) from Southern Illinois is taking time out of his day to go up to Chicago to meet a friend from the Internet. Will #1 lives in Chicago with both his parents who are doctors and has a best friend named Tiny Cooper, who he mentions is “the happiest person he’s ever met.” Through Tiny, Will meets a girl named Jane Turner, who supposedly likes Will. Back in Southern Illinois, Will #2 lives with his mom and his best friend Maura. Will #2 also hides a secret; he’s got a secret boyfriend named Isaac, whom he met online. One night Will #1 and his friends make plans to go out and Will #2 makes plans to meet up with Isaac in Chicago – and little do the two boys know that they will soon come face to face with another Will Grayson. Since I don’t want to spoil anymore of this great book, you all should go pick up a copy and read it. Its AR level is 5.1, and it’s worth 11 points! I assure you this is a good read. It’s the first John Green book I’ve ever read and I love it! So, there you go, a new book for all you guys to enjoy.

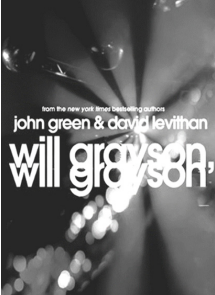
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Looking for the “Great Perhaps”
–LEANETTE ESTRADA–

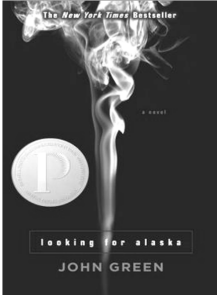
Looking for Alaska is John Green’s debuting young adult novel; he is also the writer of the much acclaimed novel *The Fault in Our Stars*. Even though it won the Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in Young Adult Literature, it has received countless criticism because it hits the controversial points: drinking, sex, language, smoking, and drug use . Even though the characters often behave badly, they are vivid, real, and complex. Their story can even help readers start dealing with some big topics, such as self-discovery and loss.

The protagonist, Miles “Pudge” Halter is obsessed with famous last words. The novel begins with Miles heading to Florida to attend a school in Alabama. He is introduced by his roommates to beautiful, mysterious and emotionally confused Alaska Young. As the story progresses, it centers on Miles’ life at Culver Creek and his growing attachment to Alaska. She pulls Pudge into her world, launches him into the Great Perhaps, and steals his heart.

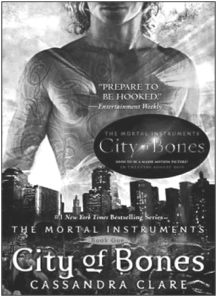
Looking for Alaska cannot be merely written off as a typical boy-meets-girl love story, because it’s not. It’s more of a tale of how love isn’t as translucent as it seems. What makes this novel even more interesting is that it doesn’t hide anything. It showcases what young love and growing up really are in a brutal and honest light. The style of the characters’ communication, their relationships with each other, their pasts and the pleasure that comes with a being a kid are transparent through the pages. John Green’s talent is noticeable, because it’s the type of talent that can make you close the crisp last page of a novel and come out as a different person. You might not weep buckets like most people did at the end of *The Fault in Our Stars*, but you’ll get attached to Miles and Alaska, just as they do to each other.



Johngreenbooks.com



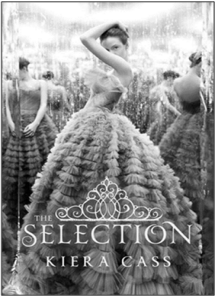
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Can it Get Worse?
–JUDITH MARTINEZ–

Recently, the *Mortal Instruments* has become a popular series among my peers, who are completely amazed of how great these books are. I decided to see for myself what the big stir was about. Naturally, I began by reading *City of Bones*. It is the first book of the *Mortal Instruments* series by Cassandra Clare.

Out of all the books that I have read, *City of Bones* is definitely one that I despised reading. It is about a teenage girl named Clarissa Fray, referred to as Clary. She goes on a mission to rescue her mom. It is the typical story about a young girl who discovers her identity during a quest. She is this small fragile person who eventually grows to be powerful. And of course, she is in love with two men; which one will she choose? This plot is overrated. To make matters worse, there is no action occurring throughout the stories. Yes, there are minor battles here and there, but nothing is actually happening. These scenes are filled with gruesome and vivid details about deaths of various creatures. Other than that, all you read about are the frequent injuries characters have and how hot the atmosphere is. Clary is always mentioning that she is soaked in her own sweat. The only attention-grabbing chapters were the last three. Clary completes her initial mission that will be continued in order for her to find self-knowledge.

Hopefully, the other books in the series are worth reading. I was disappointed in this book because I had expected it to be mind-blowing. I give the book a score of 4/10.

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The Book at the End of Your Reading List
–OMAR AMER–

The Restaurant at the End of the Universe by Douglas Adams has a surplus of randomness and confusion crammed into a comical novel. The book wasn’t bad overall; however, its plot is a little too complex. With those unfamiliar with Adam’s science fiction series, this is the second book, with the first titled *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. The story follows two Earth refugees Arthur and Trillian, a friend of Arthur named Ford Prefect, and ex-president of the galaxy Zaphod Beeblebrox. They take to the stars, adventuring throughout the galaxy, encountering aliens (some that end up wanting to kill them), and eating at a restaurant to enjoy apocalyptic entertainment and food that serves itself. They end up in many tight situations and find unusual ways to escape Vogon attacks , a killing machine called the Vortex and a dive straight into a sun. Conversely, these adventures don’t seem to add up to any successful achievement (despite the fact that Arthur and Ford discover the question to life and the universe), making it seem that this novel is full of sidetracks that takes the reader away from the intentional goal.

There are numerous plot twists, which may cause readers who enjoy a straightforward story to shy away. Even though this is intended to be a negative portrayal, only taking a harsh view of this book wouldn’t be a wise choice. Now, don’t forget altogether about this book. Although it was a bit too confusing for my taste, it did create a few laughs. Perhaps I’m jumping to conclusions too quickly, as it is only the second book in the series. Leaving this book at the bottom of your reading list really isn’t a bad idea.

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The Selection
–MONIQUE EJENUKO–

The Selection by Kiera Cass is the first in a projected trilogy and yet another book in the dystopian line up. My initial feelings before picking the book were that it was going to be a cutesy novel loaded with trivial problems and scenarios that do little to help a lackluster plot. To my dismay, I was right.

The novel is set in a distant future where the US is a constitutional monarchy named Ilea. In order to supplement a line of heirs to the throne, the kingdom holds the Selection: thirty-five girls from different provinces throughout the kingdom are chosen randomly by a lottery to stay in the palace and compete for the prince’s heart. The main heroine, America Singer, to nobody’s surprise but her own is chosen to participate, despite her strong reluctance of leaving her family and first love, Aspen, behind. She is then thrust into a world of dress, jewelry, and completion to become the future Queen of Ilea.

Cass has proven that she has an extraordinary talent for writing unoriginal storylines. It is true that pure originality is nearly impossible to achieve, but her blatant unoriginality was off-putting. The entire novel was a mash-up of Suzanne Collins’s *The Hunger Games* and ABC’s *The Bachelor* minus the bloodshed of *The Hunger Games*. Similar to *The Hunger Games*, people are chosen in a lottery from different districts/provinces. There was also an element of *The Bachelor* in that women compete for a single man’s affections. It was difficult to find Cass’ own story underneath the derivative plot.

Another problem I had with the book was with the overall structure of the dystopian society. It was not only insufficiently explained but also improbable and implausible. The idea that the US smoothly transitioned into a constitutional monarchy is utterly unbelievable, clearly showing Cass’ lack of historical and economical understanding. She provides vague and incoherent background as to how this transition happened. The society has little to be desired as well. People in the society are segregated into a caste system of numbers, with number one being the top tier. That detail alone is possibly the only thing that brands the novel dystopian. It seemed too simplistic in its description of people who make up the caste. Cass explains where the artisans and the rich go but not others, such as doctors and teachers. The external conflict falters as well. It is random and lacks substantial background, which makes the whole conflict trivial.

The characterization is a pitiful concoction of clichés that only served to make me constantly roll my eyes. The characters are as shallow as they come. I did not care to invest in them as characters. Their interaction is somewhat forced or unbelievable and only succeeds in being stiff. Of course, seeing that Cass is such a talented writer, she opts to put a rich and deceitful character to ruffle up other character’s feathers, drawing out the cliché that the rich are greed, vain, selfish people, and their poorer counterparts are humble and full with morality. There was not a single dynamic character in the entire novel, only simplistic ones with pathetic dialogue.

The book was frighteningly horrible to the point I had to ask myself, “Why did she bother to write this story?” – a question I constantly asked myself as I dove deeper into the novel. With an A.R. reading level of 4.7 and 12 points, it is not worth the points! I will grant Cass that the cover is stunning, but I guess the saying “do not judge a book by its cover” is right!