

No Fear Junior Year

By: Shamera Johnson

Everyone knows that junior year is the most important year of high school.

Here are a few reasons why:

- ① ACT Testing
- ① SAT Testing
- ① Time to get yourself together
- ① Colleges use grades from this year
- ① College visits
- ① Search for scholarship opportunities
- ① Finishing up volunteer hours
- ① ELM Testing
- ① Narrowing down college choices
- ① Last chance to become active (work other than academics: clubs, sports, etc).
- ① Last of CST testing
- ① Because the next year is SENIOR YEAR

A New Paper in the Newspaper

By Dax Capangpangan

If you haven't noticed (because you were so enthralled by the front page), there's a new paper in the newspaper. Yeah, that was a bad pun, why don't you write something better, like in a book review on the new insert!

The new insert (if you're too lazy to look or too... pretty to figure it out) has two sides: one for positive book reviews and one for negative book reviews. After this month, CP teachers (or at least Jahnke) will be looking for students who want to write book reviews and a lucky few will be put on the newspaper.

When writing a book review, the title, the author, and the book level are needed.

The book reviews don't need to be that long; three paragraphs should be enough. Also, when writing a negative review, "It was too hard" is not really a valid reason to hate a book (because that's not really the book's fault). If you're having trouble reviewing a book, just think of the book like a movie and review it like that (unless that "is too hard" too). Send your AR review to hmsanewspaper@yahoo.com

AVIATOR

NEWS AP EXAMS

BY NHI NGUYEN

College application season can be a nerve-wrecking time. You've worked hard all these years, but how do you know you've got the academic qualifications that colleges are looking for? One way is to take AP classes. By taking an AP course, you're letting colleges know that you have what it takes to succeed in an undergraduate environment. Admission officers see that you've challenged yourself with college-level work and expectations, and in the competitive admissions process, having an AP course on your application can be very important. Since all AP teachers, no matter where or how they're teaching, have to provide a curriculum that meets college standards, admissions officers may see you as better prepared for college than other applicants. In addition, by making it through an AP course and scoring successfully on the AP Exam, you can save tons of money. These earned credits can potentially save students thousands of dollars in college tuition and other fees. Taking an AP course and passing the exam can exempt you from general education requirements.

Prepare Yourself: The Final Stretch is Here!

By Eddie Crevalo

As we all know, coming back from spring break isn't easy, and we'd like nothing more than to return to sleeping, waking up late, knowing there is no homework due tomorrow, no log entries to receive and that you can do absolutely nothing on a Wednesday afternoon and get away with it. To all the uninformed, I'm sorry to say that I have bad news: there will be no more vacations until the school year is over. Heartbreaking, I know, but dry your tears, it's not all bad. Before summer "vacation" (Any break deserves air quotes because, after all, what's a break without any wonderful homework?) arrives, and as of Talent Show, there are only nine weeks left in the school year. One of these is CST week, so you can count on one less. If you're a senior, count an extra week off and thank whoever came up with Senior Week. In addition, there is a four-day weekend the fourth week of May. This is preceded by AP exams, which is a good as well as bad thing; Good, because it gets you out of class and they'll finally be over, Bad, because they are the AP exams. Sadly, there are no more furlough days to provide us with the wonderfully random and undoubtedly unexpected three-day weekends. The best way to tackle these last few weeks is to take them one at a time, remembering the important dates ahead (the worst thing is to be shocked that you have a test tomorrow, or that the big paper is due in a couple of hours), and to remind yourself how close you are to the end. After all, that is what we've all been working for since August.

College Presentations

By Serratia Krank

In the multipurpose room, at least once a week, a college presentation is being held during CP. The presentation is led by an HMSA alumni hoping to give insight to the current students here about the college they attend(ed). Some of these colleges include UC Merced, UC Davis, USC, CSU Northridge, and others. What's great about these presentations is that everyone is allowed to attend from a senior down to a freshman. The seniors get a better look at the school they received an acceptance from, juniors take notes on the colleges they want to apply to next year, sophomores take notes on the score ranges of the SATs and ACTs they'll need to earn next year in order to have a shot at their "dream school," and freshmen take notes on everything because it'll all be relevant to them in the next three years. If you haven't attended one of these presentations yet, make sure you do before they're over. You might like what you see, and many people find their eventual college by accident.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Isaac Asimov's Robot Dreams:

Science Fiction Done Right

By Linda Ho

Science fiction often has an undeserved image. It isn't all little green men from Mars landing their spaceships in backyards. In fact, Isaac Asimov's writings are realistic; or rather, they are tempered with common sense. You may be surprised to know that he coined the term "robotics." Even when Asimov creates far-off lands on imaginary planets, the characters still behave understandably. They don't do what annoys me the most about some other science fiction characters: speak with randomly placed capital letters – "We're going to the Feast where the Organization will revive the Machine." Furthermore, his stories aren't overly moralistic. They're focused on entertainment value; there's no annoyingly obvious message about how if you don't change your attitude, the world will become an unbelievable, overly exaggerated dystopia like the story shows.

Asimov's style is like looking at the world upside down: reality is rearranged. If you haven't noticed already, I'm a big fan of Isaac Asimov. He's my favorite author, and with good reason. His stories always have snappy plot twists and clever endings. Perhaps this is what sets his writing apart the most. I would give you an example, but then you wouldn't read one of his stories for yourself, would you? Optimists and cynics alike can rejoice: sometimes the plot resolutions are wittily dark, and sometimes the good guy gets to win.

Considering that it's way more than halfway into the semester, and that Robot Dreams is worth 21 points for a 5.9 ATOS level (while we're on that topic, the quiz number is 53687), this book is definitely worth your time. Because it was written mostly in the 1950s, it feels like you're watching old classic movies. This book consists of 21 short stories, so it's good for people with short attention spans. If you don't like one story, the whole book isn't ruined.

Asimov gracefully treads the line between imagination and reality.

MY LITTLE AR RANT

By Brian Moncada

In wake of the harangue many of you face at the hands of Ms. Smith, Mr. Berumen, and the English Department, many of you must be thinking that AR is a waste of time, right? Not that High School experience you were looking for? Here's a newsflash: Welcome to HMSA!

I'm sure you have heard from countless of people in the past few weeks that HMSA does AR for our own good, so I won't waste my- well Mr. Jahnke's- ink trying to drive that in. Instead of complaining about having to read against your will, about how much so it is akin to child abuse, why not that allotted complaining time to read? Is the thought of reading really so repugnant, so stygian, so disgusting? There's another spin on reading books: see it as a way to escape your dull existence, where your greatest conflict is between doing that choice piece of homework during homeroom or lunch time, and instantly be transported anywhere you please. No really, there are more than a million books in circulation.

There are thousands of reasons to read, but if you don't already know that, then maybe you aren't as great as you have deluded yourself into believing. From what I hear, the AR rewards are only getting better. After all, who wants to worry about finding a way to finish that 5th or 6th period homework while you're out with Mr. Berumen right? And, hey who knows, you may find a book that resonates with you.

Some teachers like Ms. Sharpe and Ms. Davis even have a reading list, and the best part is that they give you points towards a quiz, midterm, or final. Need another reason to love AR? Another little thought about rewards from the AR system is that it helps you prepare for the SAT, CST, and even English tests. How? It gives you a way to practice your reading comprehension and it can even supplement your vocabulary. So do us all a favor, stop complaining because AR does nothing but help you.

R.I.P THE HOST (2008-2013)

By Yasmine Gutierrez



Meeting the expectations a novel and its fans set is a disheartening task, but the silver lining for directors and screenwriters? Nobody expects it to be better.

It was a given that the movie wouldn't have the same spark of insight and exploit that the viewers would have gotten from reading the novel, but it's always a good idea to put at least some effort into it. Director Andrew Niccol butchered the key points instead of trying to uncover their true intent: to show the undertaking of finding one's identity, the hostility of human nature, and being the prisoner of your own mind. The universal elements of the novel are what made it so widely read and highly acclaimed. Where did the romance and love-triangle (square?) come from? Viewers who read beforehand walked in ready for the intense, thematic dialogue between Wanderer and her Host, not for a kissing scene every 10 minutes. Would it have been so hard to steer away from trying to impress the teenage masses? I say to hell with them; if you're going to adapt an age-neutral novel, do it right.

Picky fans will always attack the most obvious changes as the novel transitions into a movie: subtle changes in plot and characters. It doesn't do any good to complain that Melanie was supposed to fling herself down an elevator shaft instead of out a window, or how the Seeker was supposed to be a petite, black-haired woman instead of tall and blonde. Directors have the creative license to adapt films how they see fit, that I understand. What I don't, however, is twisting the intent of characters. Wanderer wanted to protect Melanie's family of refugees and walk away from the society of Souls that she suddenly realized was not as benign as she had always believed. Niccol made it seem like she did it because of her compelling fascination with Jared, Melanie's boyfriend. How shallow can you get? The only sense of deep connection came from Wanderer readily giving up her Host's body to give back the life she believed she'd stolen, and that was a seemingly insignificant scene in that it was only a few minutes long. This was arguably the most insightful event in the novel while it only makes a quick cameo on screen.

Owen Gleiberman of Entertainment Weekly described it as "[a] bizarre Saturday Night Live sketch about a girl with a bratty alien inside her," and, as reluctant as I am to agree, I must. Whenever someone asks if I'm a fan of The Host, I quickly clear the air by saying I'm a fan of the novel, not the teen-romance insult that Niccol dared to believe was good enough for the big screen.

FAREWELL, MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

By Elsa Ayala

The punk rock band announced last month they were splitting up after twelve years. A reason was not given for their break-up, but the news was heartbreaking all the same. Gerard Way, front man, formed the band as a response to the 9/11 attacks. The rest is history. With four studio albums, worldwide tours, and hardcore fans, they'll always be remembered. Their second album, Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge, went platinum. Their third album, Welcome to the Black Parade, featured some of their most popular songs. Throughout the years it was evident MCR was theatrical and dark, but that was what made them special. Fans experienced seeing wardrobe from MCR's music videos on The Black Parade World Tour. They also went through the various hair colors and styles Gerard featured, from long and black to short and blonde to long and orange. Even though one may look at this break-up as the end of a journey, My Chemical Romance shouldn't be forgotten. Their music will always be relevant, and one thing is for sure: My Chemical Romance will be missed.

2013 MLB Predictions:

By Enrique Ruvalcaba

AL MVP: Yoenis Cespedes exploded in the second half of the 2012 season. The Cuban proved last year that the Coliseum (Oakland's home stadium which is considered a pitcher's park) won't be an obstacle for him to clear the fences. His bat and reliable defense puts him in front of offensive juggernauts with poor defense such as Miguel Cabrera. The only legit candidate that stands in his way is the 21 year-old phenom Mike Trout. Cespedes will lead an underrated squad to postseason once again and possibly claim World Series gold.

AL Cy Young: Felix Hernandez should finally capture his well deserved AL Cy Young. The American League is very thin in elite pitchers. His chances strengthen after Angels' ace Jered Weaver went down with an injury and will be out for a lengthy time. The downside for the Venezuelan is that he performed poorly the final month of the season. During his eight-year career, his ERA stands above 3.50 over the final month of the season. It's a respectable stat, but if the race for Cy Young comes down to the wire, it may cost him the award. If he manages to fix this minor liability, he will run away with the award.

NL MVP: Dodgers' Clayton Kershaw is my NL MVP although Strasburg will barely have a better pitching season than Kershaw. Why would I choose Kershaw as NL MVP but not as NL Cy Young (Which I gave to Strasburg)? Kershaw is more valuable to the Dodgers (Who I expect to make the postseason) than Strasburg is to the Nationals. The Nationals with or without Strasburg will make the postseason. Dodgers without Kershaw won't. Through Kershaw's first two starts, he's blanked his first two opponents with poor run support. In his first start he homered the Dodgers' first run in the eighth winning in a game they won 4-0. In his second start the Dodgers barely won 1-0 with Kershaw pitching seven shutout innings. If this were any other pitcher pitching in these situations instead of Kershaw, the Dodgers would struggle winning games. Their other starters wouldn't perform week in and week out like Kershaw with poor run support. The offense can't score unlike the Nationals juggernaut offense. Kershaw has already single-handedly won the Dodgers 2 games and it's April. If Dodgers make the postseason, Kershaw wins it. If Dodgers don't, other solid candidates are Buster Posey, Joey Votto, Stephen Strasburg, and Bryce Harper.

NL Cy Young: Stephen Strasburg's shot at the Cy Young last year was cut short due to too much workload. This year is his first real shot at the Cy Young and he'll take it. His strikeout potential, home park, and team's offense will provide him the cushion to take the Cy Young. The other potential winner is the aforementioned Clayton Kershaw.



Sports

NBA Predictions

By Anthuan Cruz

As the end of the regular season comes close to an end, many people already have predictions for the East and West conference finals. This year there seems to be less competition in the East. This allows the battle on the West to rage on. Below are my predictions:

Western Conference Finals -
Oklahoma City Thunder vs. Denver Nuggets

Eastern Conference Finals -
Miami Heat vs. Indiana Pacers

As much as I want to be hopeful that the Lakers will make it to the finals, the first two rounds of the playoffs will be incredibly difficult. They will either play Oklahoma City or San Antonio first (two teams that can easily pick apart the Laker's defense) and will be fighting for every game.

It is easy to see that the Miami Heat will make it to the finals considering that no team can develop a game plan against them. Based on their earlier streak, the Heat are ready to compete for a back-to-back win (But I really hope they don't).

I say that after a few years of being taken out in the early rounds of the playoffs, the Indiana Pacers have a chance to make it to the Eastern Conference finals. Being the tallest and best defensive team in the NBA, the Pacers will make even the most offensive teams struggle. Many of their key players explode on offense and can create mismatches.

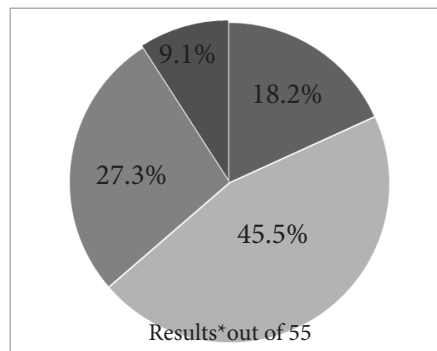
After making a tremendous trade, the Denver Nuggets may be able to get very far in the playoffs. Being one of the fastest teams in the NBA, the Nuggets leave teams in the dust on fast breaks. Their key players such as Kenneth Faried, Andre Iguodala, and Ty Lawson run the floor really well on both sides of the court. Their weaknesses include having no player to rely on during late game situations and also losing their talented 6'10 small forward Danilo Gallinari.

It is no question that Oklahoma City are looking to avenge their loss against the Heat. Being one of the most aggressive and well-rounded teams in the NBA, Oklahoma City is a force to be reckoned with. They have made a few trades and some of their key players like Serge Ibaka have improved their game.

Either way, the regular season is almost over, the playoffs begin next week, and around graduation time the finals may come down to the fact neither Kevin Durant nor anyone else in the league is able to guard LeBron James.

What is your favorite sport? (Survey)

By TeMera Evans



Football-- 18.2%
Soccer-- 45.5%
Basketball-- 27.3%
Baseball-- 9.1%

What is your favorite sport? (Teacher Quotes)

Launius:

"My favorite sport to play is soccer. My favorite sport to watch is football and hockey. I like to play soccer because I've played it my entire life but I can see how it's boring occasionally on television. I like football because there's only 16, 17 games throughout the season so every game matters."

Atanga:

"I'm a soccer player. [I like it because] it's a fun game."

Flint:

"College basketball [is my favorite sport] because it is exciting. It's March Madness. It's not the overpaid sports brats arguing and going on strike for millions of dollars. College basketball is pure sport played for the heart and soul of the game just as John Wooden and Naismith intended for it to be: a game of character."

Kircher:

"My favorite sport is volleyball. Volleyball is my favorite sport because I enjoy playing on the beach; I played in high school and college. It's something I really enjoy playing and now I'm coaching the Girls' Varsity Volleyball team here at school. I enjoy doing that and it's a great sport that's easy to learn and a lot of fun for people to play."

Highducheck:

"My favorite sport is football because I've always played football and I like the action."

Mendoza:

"My favorite sport is football. That's futbol Americano. I love the tail-gating, comradery, and the hits."

Berumen:

"My favorite sport to play is rugby because it the blending of the two other great sports which are American football and what's known in the rest of the world as futbol and in America as soccer."

Enger:

"I played four sports in high school so it's a difficult question. I enjoy playing volleyball the most because it's something you can do all through your life. It's a low- impact sport and really fun sport and team competitive. I love watching football unless I'm in a stadium. There is nothing better than being at a baseball game so my favorite sport to watch is baseball."

Gullikson:

"My favorite sport is basketball. I like basketball [because] there's a lot of action, a lot of scoring, and it's fun and entertaining."

Juan Carlos Dominguez (senior):

“Existence means you’re just there; living is putting yourself out in the world for a purpose.”

Victoria Rosito (senior):

“Living is going through life doing what you normally do. Existing is doing something what you normally wouldn’t do just for the feeling of doing it. For example: for me to exist, I would have to go skydiving just because I feel like it. To live, I just go to school like I normally do.”

Rofida Rahka (junior):

“People who live know their life will end. People who exist don’t care.”

Angelie Tuazon (junior):

“Living: Making memories, experiencing, taking risks, enjoying life as well as overcoming the obstacles; I see ‘life’ in ‘living.’”
Existing: Droning through every day knowing that you’ll die in the end; I see ‘exit’ in existing.”

Jamson Chuc (former senior):

“Living is being able to make your own decisions and enjoying the benefits of them or taking responsibility for their consequences. Living is enjoying the time you have and not letting things ruin your day. Living feels great. “Existing” is more of an insult if you use it to describe people. For example, look in front of you there’s probably a wall right? Or something of the sort? The wall is existing, but it’s not living.”

Melissa Martinez (sophomore):

“Well when you live, you’re doing something with life; you’re being someone, a part of something. You take chances and use all the opportunities you get to make life worth continuing to live it because it’s something you’re [going to] have to do for a very long time. Existing is being there, the background, your sort of day-to-day life nothing really changes you and you don’t really change anything. Existing is something we all do, but living is something only the alive do, as in, those with a free spirit to explore, discover, imagine, learn, create, seek, try. We all exist, it’s our choice to live, and if you ask me, living is much better than existing, maybe harder, but all worthwhile I tell [you], I will live, what will you do?”

Zahid’s response:

If you exist, you’re a mere piece of background paper on this dreary life stage. To live is to make your life known to the world, to shine bright, to make the best of your situation and come out of it stronger, and to make yourself a name that can leave a mark on this world. The ancient Egyptians believed that the soul was comprised of 5 parts: the Ib (heart), the Ren (name), Ba (soul), and the most impactful- the Sheut (shadow). Each part contributed to a person’s identity, while the Sheut represented the person’s legacy, influence, and impact on the world-the sign of a person who truly lived. The Sheuts continued to stay in this realm-even after the soul moved on to the next life- becoming permanent echoes of all those who truly lived. If you exist you will be noticed, but if you live you will be remembered. To be remembered keeps your image and essence alive, and allows you to achieve mankind’s most elusive goal: you will become immortal.
“When do the dead die? When they are forgotten.” Laura Esquivel

Random Quote:

“Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny” –C.S. Lewis

MONSANTO – WORLD’S MOST HATED COMPANY BY MICHAEL CASTILLO

The idea that all companies are corrupt is not going to disappear any time soon, especially with Monsanto constantly reinforcing that idea.

Monsanto is arguably the world’s most hated corporation – with good reason – due to their long record of harsh and controversial policies and patents. They were the producers of some of the world’s most environmentally detrimental products – such as DDT and bovine growth hormone. They control agriculture. They ruined agricultural diversity. They financially damaged many of the nation’s farms. They even influenced control over the nation’s laws. What could make this corporation any more evil? They planted a rider on the recently passed Agricultural Appropriations Bill that protects genetically modified seed from being immediately halted, even in the face of health concerns. What this means: their main product’s production and sale cannot be immediately stopped, even if it has detrimental health effects.

Genetically modified objects foods are not necessarily harmful –the health risks are miniscule and theoretical at best- so the rider is somewhat unimportant, but in the case that a GMO is harmful, the rider can prove detrimental in stopping it. The fact that Monsanto is trying to prevent repeal based on health issues so that they could make more profit is immoral and disgusting. Monsanto is constantly proving that they have little to no regard for the public. They are taking an industry that could be used for massive public benefit and abusing it so that they could gain more profit. Monsanto is the epitome of corruption.

Did you know...?

By Nardeen Gorgy

1. The 57 on Heinz ketchup bottles represents the number of varieties of pickles the company once had.
2. An ostrich’s eye is bigger than its brain.
3. Most lipsticks contain fish scales.
4. 8% of people have an extra rib.
5. A lobster’s blood is colorless, but when exposed to oxygen, it turns blue.
6. Armadillos have four babies at a time and all are of the same sex.
7. Birds need gravity to swallow.
8. 85% of plant life is found in the ocean.
9. Lemons contain more sugar than strawberries.
10. The CIA spent \$20 million on a cat equipped to spy on the Soviets, but it got hit by a taxi and died.
11. Shooting a gun causes the same chemical reactions in the brain as a passionate kiss.
12. We are attracted to the scent of people genetically different from us to avoid incest.
13. Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite.
14. Goats and octopus’ eyes have rectangular pupils.
15. Butterflies taste with their feet.

AVIATOR NEWS

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The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother by James McBride is the story of a young black man searching to uncover his mother's past and his family's roots. McBride starts his memoir by describing his strange mother, Ruth McBride, who has a mysterious past. The identity of Ruth McBride starts to unravel as the story progresses. James McBride recreates his mother's memories through this book and discovers that her past was much more complicated than he thought it was. Ruth McBride was born Ruchel Dwara Zylska. She came from an Orthodox Jewish family. She lived in Virginia with her father, crippled mother, and two siblings. Her father was a strict rabbi as well as a cruel father and husband. Ruth ran away after committing a disgraceful crime for a rabbi's daughter living in the early 20th century: marrying a black man. Ruth gave up Judaism and traveled to New York with her husband. After the death of her husband, she remarried. Ruth McBride raised a total of 12 children on her own after the death of her second husband. She worked hard and suffered for years. McBride worked two or three jobs at a time, provided for a huge family, and faced racism from everyone around her. However, Ruth McBride managed to successfully raise all her kids, encouraging each child to go to college and earn a degree. What a woman!

James McBride doesn't only speak of his mother's past; he includes his own autobiography in the book as well. McBride shows the reader the struggles he faced as child of a black father and a white Jewish mother. Growing up in a chaotic household of twelve children, McBride never had the chance to question his mother's race or identity. As he grew older, he began to wonder and search for answers to all the race questions. James McBride successfully weaves his own life story into his mother's story. His mother influenced him greatly throughout his lifetime. McBride went through a phase of drug use and crime at a certain point in his life, but his mother dragged him out of that phase. Thanks to Ruth McBride, James McBride became the successful author he is today.

The book is very easy to read and follow. The structure of the book is very unique. James McBride tells one chapter and his mother tells the next. This unique structure keeps the reader engaged. The term "page-turner" barely does this book justice. McBride presents the topic of racism, drug-use, crime, hate, love, success, failure, death, financial needs, depression, and hope all in one book! There isn't a social problem that The Color of Water does not cover. What makes the book so amazing is that the topics and issues are indirectly presented through the different stories McBride and his mother tell. Once you start reading the book, you won't want to put it down.
Level: 6.1 Quiz Number: 17804

Relic: A Trip into Sci-fi Horror
By Michael Castillo

Relic immediately drops you into the strange yet interesting genre of science-fiction horror. No, it's not the kind of science-fiction involving giant spaceships, strange stargates, and cool lightsabers, but one that involves an actual understanding of science. The plot revolves around a gruesome series of unexplained murders that take place in a museum. Yes, you read right. A museum. Imagine this: you're walking in a museum, enjoying the strange but slightly creepy displays, only to find a decapitated body on the floor. Now here's where the science kicks in, a small part of the brain -known as the hypothalamus- is missing in every victim. This leads the main cast of characters on a strange investigation in which they must figure out who the murderer is, by exploring and utilizing every scientific avenue they can think of, before the murderer gets to them.

Aside from an interest in science-fiction, the reader is going to need an interest in biology, chemistry, and a dictionary. After these requirements are established, the reader will embark on an interesting investigation, reminiscent of those crime-solving shows, involving forensic science, amazing detective work, and mass-murder. The characters in the novel are interesting and have good character development. Their internal conflicts manifest in this novel quite well, as they must resolve their own issues while trying to resolve the main conflict. The use of science also keeps the reader interested. It gives the reader a sense of what forensic science and crime-scene investigation is like. It also extends itself into scientific theory, exploring evolution and the possible effects of over-hunting. Relic is a great book that will always keep the reader interested and pensive; possibly even affecting their interest in science. Level: 5.5 Quiz Number: 38699

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings: A Beautifully Written Inspiration
By Shamera Johnson

Poet, writer, performer, teacher, and director Maya Angelou's autobiography, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, is a moving story starting from her childhood to the birth of her son. Angelou's autobiography is one of the many books available for AR points. I bet you're thinking, "Autobiography? Is this book non-fiction?" OF COURSE it is. Angelou's autobiography has an ATOS Book Level of 6.7. Her diction and play on words appeal to high school students. Now I bet you're wondering, "This book sounds great, but how many points is it worth?" This book is worth a whopping 13 points, yes 13 points (I was shocked myself).

You would think that the book is boring and drags on without any personal connection, but it is the complete opposite. Just like any teen vampire book about "true love" or any Crank, Glass, or Fallout, this book is intriguing and pulls you in. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings makes you feel as if Angelou is telling you your own life story. Her comedic, yet serious, and uplifting tone allows the reader to feel comfortable while reading the book like they are sitting in a living room on a sofa. Throughout the book, Angelou has many different stories that bring about different moods. Angelou's autobiography sends you on a rollercoaster of emotions, but in the end, the entire ride is worth your while.

Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is a quick read. Each page is filled with poetic words that create warmth in the reader's heart. Even if the reader does not enjoy the book, throughout the autobiography, the reader gains a huge amount of respect for Angelou's openness and vulnerability as she shares her story with the world. Read this book to grasp Angelou's story; fully digest all of her pain, hurt, smiles, and victories. With all of the inspiration and connection that Angelou's story creates, the fact that you can get AR points from reading it is just a bonus. Level: 5.4 Quiz Number: 8660

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime
By Dax Capangpangan

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime by Mark Haddon is a fictional story about a special boy, named Christopher, with Asperger's syndrome who one day finds the neighbor's dog dead in their yard stabbed by a garden fork and decides to investigate its "murder." His condition makes him unable to empathize with others, but excel in math and sciences. He is hoping to take A-level exams to get into university and become an astronaut. The story itself is really short (226 pages), and it has quite a few pictures (of math, Yay!). It keeps your attention because of the interesting story and surprises and suspense, making it especially short. It could probably be read in a short sitting, if not a weekend.

The readers can also feel a connection with this awkward and smart protagonist (or it could just be me), meaning others might actually, *gasp*, learn from this story. Having a book level of 5.4 and 10 AR points makes it a quick and easy read (and quick and easy points).

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Jellicoe Road by Melina Marchetta concentrates on the ideas of abandonment, loss, friendship, and love so strong that it can consume you. This is a mind-opening, intense, and amazing book that kept me on the edge of my seat. I couldn't contain myself from getting sucked into the book and laughing, crying, and holding my breath at certain scenes. I wanted to figure out the mystery behind Taylor Markham, Hannah, and the five kids Hannah wrote about in her stories (thinking about it makes me want to read it again).

Taylor was abandoned by her drug-addict mother at the 7-Eleven on Jellicoe Road when she was eleven. She was brought up at the Jellicoe School. At the age of seventeen she was appointed the head of her house and had the responsibility of leading her school in the Territory Wars, between the Jellicoe School kids, the townies (the kids from the town), and the cadets (Sydney boys that come every year to Jellicoe for a six-week training exercise). All the kids see their Territory Wars as something extremely important without the knowledge that the Territory Wars were created by five close friends that were bored out of their minds. They are five close friends whose lives are entwined with Taylor's life beyond her dreams (although she does constantly dream with a person she calls her...sorry I shouldn't give out too much).

Throughout, Taylor builds a close bond with friends she never expected to have; the new five friends. With their help she was able to make sense of everything. She was able to understand her bond with Hannah and the original five friends. Overall, this book is perfect for any person who wants to experience some intriguing and amazing reading or if you just want to get some AR points, its reading level is 5.0 and its quiz number is 126984.

A Child Called It
By Elsa Ayala

A Child Called It by Dave Pelzer is a nonfiction piece that everyone should read. Pelzer revisits his childhood that was filled with abuse, misery, and hopelessness. In this journey the reader learns the cruelty people inflict on others. Pelzer was physically and emotionally abused by his mother throughout his childhood. His fear led him to hide his bruises and tears from teachers and neighbors. The fact that Pelzer was living with a. indifferent siblings that treated him like an animal, and b. a weak father that couldn't defend his son, makes his case even more heartbreaking.

When reading, the audience feels every hurtful word and every agonizing beating this little boy takes. It's very emotional to picture what Pelzer went through as a kid. Instead of feeling loved and cared for like a child should feel, he felt alone and helpless. Each time Pelzer slept in the cold attic, received a blow to the head, or got no food for days the reader realizes how fortunate they are. A book that's as powerful as making someone reflect on their life is definitely worth reading.

The reason Pelzer shares his inspirational story is so people report any signs of child abuse because a situation like comes with a lot of pain. It's impossible not to go on this rollercoaster with Pelzer. The horrible experience this child has brings tears to one's eyes. Even though much of this piece is difficult to read because of all the detail, it's great. Not only is it intriguing, but it also has a compelling message. Level: 5.8 Quiz Number: 36564

A museum. Imagine this: you're walking in a museum, enjoying the strange but slightly creepy displays, only to find a decapitated body on the floor. Now here's where the science kicks in, a small part of the brain -known as the hypothalamus- is missing in every victim. This leads the main cast of characters on a strange investigation in which they must figure out who the murderer is, by exploring and utilizing every scientific avenue they can think of, before the murderer gets to them.

Aside from an interest in science-fiction, the reader is going to need an interest in biology, chemistry, and a dictionary. After these requirements are established, the reader will embark on an interesting investigation, reminiscent of those crime-solving shows, involving forensic science, amazing detective work, and mass-murder. The characters in the novel are interesting and have good character development. Their internal conflicts manifest in this novel quite well, as they must resolve their own issues while trying to resolve the main conflict. The use of science also keeps the reader interested. It gives the reader a sense of what forensic science and crime-scene investigation is like. It also extends itself into scientific theory, exploring evolution and the possible effects of over-hunting. Relic is a great book that will always keep the reader interested and pensive; possibly even affecting their interest in science. Level: 5.5 Quiz Number: 38699

Evermore

By Yasmine Gutierrez

If you're looking for a quick, easy read to get those final AR points, then by all means go ahead and read Evermore, a book about mystery and teenage love. If you're looking for some depth, then I suggest any other book.

Although it's hard to make up unique characters, it's good to at least put some effort into it. The protagonist, Ever, is a teen who, due to an accident that claimed the lives of her family, can see auras and hear thoughts. When it comes to captivating characters, that's about as far as it goes. Her friend Haven is a giddy "Goth" and Miles is an over-exuberant gay, and though they add some contrast to Ever's solitary character, they aren't ideal to the plot. Damen is Ever's love interest/antagonist who we find out isn't what he seems (sound familiar?). He is described as seemingly-perfect in every way and that's exactly what turns the reader off. People like depth and flaws, but there doesn't seem to be much of that going on. It's as if Noël is working on Damen's mystery and Ever's background story to keep things exciting, but she'd be surprised at how fast young readers lose their interest.

It can be a daunting task to make a non-clichéd novel that targets young readers and the dialogue and thoughts of the protagonist are key components. "Omigod, there he is! Right directly next to us! Miles squeals, in the high-pitched, singsongy whisper he saves for life's most exciting moments." No, this isn't from Glee or any other dramatized sitcom (sorry Elsa). Even teenagers would find that to be a bit excessive, no? The text is meant to help build the characters and keep the readers guessing about who they are and what their motives are: After revealing details of her friend's life to the reader, Ever says, "I don't know any of this from spying or peeking or even being told. I know because I'm psychic." What a rollercoaster that first paragraph was! Oh wait, that was page one and now I, the reader, don't have anything to guess as to what's so special about the protagonist. The way Noël writes everything so bluntly is off-putting and not a good style to use if she wants readers to keep turning the page in wonder and captivation. I didn't.

When it comes to the end of the semester, students won't care about what they read as long as they can get their AR points over with quickly, but if you don't want to be trudging through 301 pages and praying to reach the end, then here's at least one book you can cross off your list.

No to Eragon

By Enrique Ruvalcaba

The worst AR choice is a book that takes you months to read because it's boring and long. That book is Eragon. The novel by Christopher Paolini is worth 25 points, 500 pages long, and book level 5.6. The problem with this novel is that it never truly hooked me onto the plot. I had to keep on reading until around the mid-300s pages to get hooked. Even though I was hooked, I wasn't addicted to it. Eragon isn't as alluring as The Hunger Games.

The main character, Eragon, spends most of his time in the first half of the story being a rebel and being annoying. Eragon is on a mission to kill the men who murdered his father. Roran, a traveling merchant helping Eragon kill the antagonists, tries teaching Eragon how to cast spells and fight with swords. Eragon fails both times on his first attempts and quits. How is Eragon going to kill the Yazuac, who are skilled executioners, working for the evil king, if he doesn't even want to master the basic skills of fighting beforehand? You don't throw yourself in a fight-to-the-death match against elite fighters if you don't know how to fight, yet Eragon still wants to.

The plot doesn't hook you immediately. When it does, a boring chapter about whether or not Eragon should fly on his dragon unhooks the reader. It'll take weeks to finish this book. For the size and content, it's not worth the read or the possible low output of points you'll get. Eragon is flawed character that is at times annoying like Holden Caulfield. It is not worth the time to be irritated by Eragon's childishness.

AR REVIEWS

NEGATIVE

Mockingjay

By Anthuan Cruz

As with most book or movie series, the first one is the best one. Mockingjay follows Hunger Games and Catching Fire, two books who follow the same plot regarding the annual games. Mockingjay was not as good as the first two books; thus continuing the disappointment. The first two books lead the reader into thinking that the main character can get them (the districts) to unite against a higher power (the Capitol). Each speech or gesture made by the character seemed to empower each district and ready the fight against the Capitol. Mockingjay swayed away from this idea, and proceeded with the whole thing being planned while the main character was unaware of it. There was no point of having to display how the main character affected each district. All the moments where she felt she really made an impact did not make a difference because everything was already planned.

The beginning of the book began to emphasize how imperative it was for the main character to unite and lead the people against the Capitol. As the reader continues, the main character seems to act as some superhero being able to handle most situations alone. Instead of leading the districts, the districts seemed to rely on her.

There were scenes in the book that were illogical. For example, when the main character, along with her partner, was given a bow and "special" arrows, they were able to take down a squad of bomber planes. In reality, people have a hard time taking planes out with guns alone, so it seems impossible to take down planes with simply a bow. Some argue that this book takes place in the future so the technology they have should be more advanced, but I say that in the future... no one will be using a bow in war.

Level: 5.3 Quiz Number: 138972

A Doll's House

By Juan Dominguez

If you want to read an easy play, "A Doll's House" by Henrik Ibsen is a great choice: the book level is 5.9 and the Quiz Number is 10028. However, be warned that Nora-the main character-will annoy you throughout. She constantly behaves like a spoiled princess who begs for attention...how disgusting.

If you dislike going to Disneyland, you won't enjoy Nora. You see little girls dressed up in their princess dress with Mommy and Daddy buying their precious child everything she demands. Nora's description isn't any different: she talks like a little girl, she acts like a little girl, and she thinks like a little girl. What's more annoying is the fact that her husband, Torvald, continues to spoil her despite the amount of money he already gives her! DO NOT SPOIL YOUR KIDS. It gets worse: Nora brags about her fortune to her friend, Mrs. Linde, and assures her that Torvald will do anything for Nora.

Nora is also an irresponsible adult. She forges a signature that jeopardizes Torvald's life. She wants to avoid the consequences by committing suicide. Adults should-- and are supposed to--be responsible and set an excellent example for their children. Nora is the child of the house, with Torvald being the father. However, Nora has an epiphany at the end of the story and leaves her family behind to go out and "find" herself. What about her children? Nora didn't even consider her children. Even after maturing, she still doesn't consider all the consequences of her actions. If you are really interested in reading this play, be ready to have patience with Nora.

Level: 5.9 Quiz Number: 10028

Want to Help the Environment? Recycle this Book

By Brian Moncada

Inheritance, by Christopher Paolini, is the fourth part of a much acclaimed fiction series. The previous books, Eragon, Eldest, and Brisinger, did much to cement Mr. Paolini as a master writer whose books would stick around collecting dust on our shelves for years. Inheritance was a book that I waited for a very long time, and reread the entire series again in anticipation of it.

It was nothing like I expected it to be. It was a very long book (something I love, as books tend to finish right when I begin to love them), and it completely destroyed the world Mr. Paolini had slaved for years to create. The book did everything that would make bibliophiles everywhere lament; the book ended in such a manner that I threw it down in disgust when done with it. Now I can't simply spoil the ending, but I can say this: if you've read Eragon, Eldest, and Brisinger, then leave it at that. Walk away from the series if you truly love it, because if not I guarantee that Paolini's novels won't be gathering dust in our shelves, they'll be gathering mold in the dump. Maybe if he's lucky his book will get turned into lined paper or another recycled paper product, but if you ask me that's too good for the book.

If you truly don't care about content, but love big-point books then a. you are dead to me and b. read it by all means. If you are a true connoisseur of books then avoid it at all costs, unless of course you need some scrap paper.

Level: 7.5 Quiz Number: 147778

A Briefer History of Time

By Eddie Arevalo

This nonfiction book worth a measly eight points is not worth the trouble of going through chapters of science jargon. This book is not for the average student; only those with background knowledge of contemporary subjects (such as physics) will enjoy (or even understand) what the book talks about. This book offers no mercy if one doesn't, giving either the most basic knowledge or advanced insights requiring one to look at the world in a way that only applies to this book, which makes it uninteresting to the majority of readers. This is a 10.1 level book not because of any seven syllable words to look up, rather because of the jargon used. Aside from the frequently confusing concepts the book discusses, there are many unnecessary dates and names and events to memorize. In other words, it's a textbook. For instance, you have to remember who disagreed with whom about what vague topic in what year. Even for those interested in curved space-time or the conditions for time travel or the qualities of antimatter or dark matter, this book fails to satisfy the curiosity embedded with those knowledge-thirsty few that actually take the time to watch certain Science Channel specials on black holes and deep space marvels. If the concepts just mentioned sound scary and repulsive, that's exactly right. The lack of mass appeal and the specificity of the wrong things (dates, people, places) make this book a waste of time and not worth the trouble. After all, this book is simply a regurgitation of the information in Hawking's documentaries, except harder to follow and with more baggage.

Level: 10.1 Quiz Number: 110174