

KUNESTONE

June 2021 Vol. 7

*~Thank you notes
collected from all
grades at MHS*

Mrs. Voss,
Thank you for being
such an amazing
teacher this year. You
are always so kind and
teach with a smile 😊
-Ava Roland

Mr. Foti,
Thanks for starting off
the day with a fun
class, makes the day a
little bit better.
-Emily Calamel

Mr. Cat,
Thank you so much
for being the best
teacher ever! You have
been there to help with
math when I struggled
the most and have
been so patient! I
definitely could not
have made it through
the year without you!
-Hannah J.

Mrs. O'Neill,
Thank you for being
so supportive and
understanding. I
always strive for
excellence in your
class, and I really
enjoy it. Thank you for
all that you do!
-Mark Akladias

Mrs. Curtis,
Thank you so much
for making AP Lang
such a fun class this
year, and preparing us
so well for the AP
exam, even though it
was a very different
year!
-Alexandra

Mrs. Grinnell,
Thank you for being
the best and always
talking with me about
school and track!
-Elliot

Mr. Rumley,
Thank you for making
me smile and laugh
everyday, you're such
a great teacher. Thanks
for making me look
forward to class, and
learning! You're the
best!
-Katie Stern

Mr. Dougherty,
Thank you so much
for helping me
understand math when
I need help. You are a
great teacher, funny,
and make me laugh
while teaching math!
-Rafay Ansari

Mrs. Holliday,
Thank you so much
for keeping school
interesting during this
crazy year. I always
look forward to
entering your class,
and you are one of my
favorite teachers!
Thank you for doing
what you do!
-Maya G.

Chris,
Thank you for always
being a happy and
welcoming every
morning walking into
school! :)

Mrs. Rasmussen,
Thank you for always
taking with me before
class and being
consistent and patient
with the work even
through your maternity
leave! Thanks for
being a great teacher!
-Mattie Fernandez

Mrs. Gunther,
Thank you so much
for being a kind and
energetic teacher all
year!
-Eleanor Martins

Mrs. Rister,
Thank you so much
for pushing for the live
end of the year
concert. I really
appreciate it and my
family too!
-Bradley Pollard

Mr. Gostling,
Thank you so much
for taking the time to
get to know us all and
being such a caring
teacher. You always
check in with us and
give us candy. We are
seriously grateful!
-Sophie Girgis

Mrs. O'Dell,
Thank you for always
making English fun! I
love hearing your daily
stories and I can't wait
for our 5th period book
club!
-Lauren Emse

Mrs. Sidou,
Thank you for making
a really engaging and
interesting class. I
know it's been difficult
this year, but you
managed to teach us
all that we needed.
Thank you so much!
- Mason Laundry

Mrs. McKinley,
I just wanted to say
thank you for being
such a great teacher
and always having
time to help your
students this year.
-Carmon Whitcker

Mrs. Nazarian,
Thank you for all the
energy you bring to
each class and for
being one of the most
relatable teachers! You
always work hard to
create a comfortable
atmosphere and it has
made a large
difference for me 😊
-Amy Zhou

Mrs. Cedruly,
Thank you for being
supportive of me and
working with me so
hard to catch up! I
truly appreciate it!
-Miranda Cestra

Mrs. Chodak,
Thank you for
brightening up my
morning every
Tuesday and Friday. I
had a lot of fun in your
class this year.
-Ryan Sampson

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ABOUT THE EDITION

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Welcome to *The Runestone's* 7th edition. It is also my final edition as its Editor-in-Chief.

The last three years have passed in a blur of good memories. I am so proud of my strong and hardworking staff who have always produced beautiful, well-written articles and art and supported me ever since the beginning, when this paper was merely an intangible idea in my mind.

Looking ahead, I'd like to welcome our new co-Editors-in-Chief: Piper Wilson (11) and Angel Tang (10). They are a strong duo who will carry the paper onto even greater heights.

A newspaper cannot be produced without a team effort; I am so lucky to have worked and triumphed with this team.

Bye for now,

~Izzy He

pmhsnewspaper@gmail.com

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Welcome! The Runestone's newest co-Editors-in-Chief for next year:



Piper Wilson

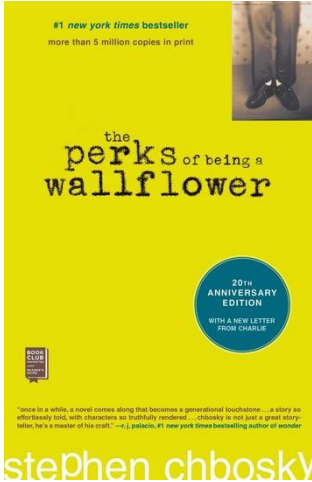


Angel Tang

Summer Reads

By Grace Bennett & Piper Wilson

Realistic Fiction:



The Perks of Being a Wallflower *Stephen Chbosky*

This novel follows the life of Charlie, a freshman trying to find his way in the world. He writes letters to a Friend, addressing two recent traumatic experiences: the death of his only middle-school friend, Michael, and of his aunt, Helen. From there, he writes about his experience in his first year of high school.

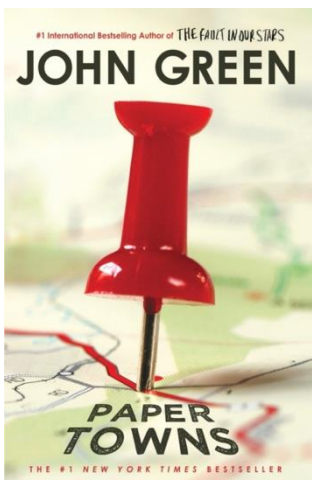
Filled with loveable characters and relatability, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a coming-of-age novel that's ideal for comprehensible poolside reading. This novel discusses sexual and physical abuse, as well as drug and alcohol use.



Everything, Everything *Nicola Yoon*

Maddy, a high school senior, hasn't left her house in 16 years. She was diagnosed with SCID as a baby: if she encounters foreign bacteria, she could die. But Olly moves in next door, and immediately captivates Maddy's attention with Bundt cake-related humor. As she continues communicating with Olly, Maddy realizes that "living" in her bacteria-free bubble isn't really living.

Everything, Everything is a sweet teen romance novel that was adapted into a movie in 2018. This story is easy to read and unique in that Yoon included different writing structures and formats within her story, such as emails and book reviews, deviating from the usual chapter after chapter.

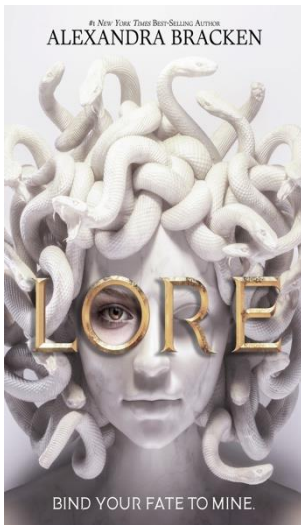


Paper Towns *John Green*

Paper Towns takes place in Florida, focusing on Q and his neighbor and long-time crush, Margo Roth Spiegelman. After a night of spontaneous shenanigans, Margo mysteriously goes missing. Along with Margo's friends, Q visits her house and starts following the trail of clues Margo left behind.

This novel is the definition of a page-turner. It's filled with classic John Green humor and sprinkled with Easter eggs and plot twists. It's an easy book to get lost in and perfect for a relaxing summer afternoon.

Historical Fiction and Mythology:

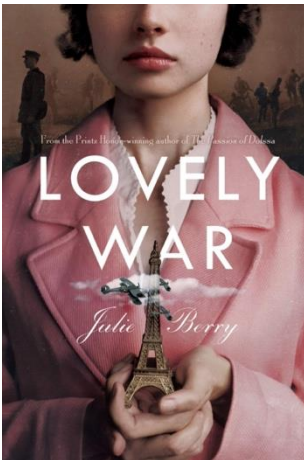


Lore

Alexandra Bracken

For seven days every seven years, the Agon—a punishment from Zeus to the Gods for trying to rebel—takes place. The Agon forces Gods and Goddess for those seven days to live like mortals while mortal descendants of ancient bloodlines try to kill them. *Lore* follows Lore Perseus during the Agon. Even though Lore has left the hunt and murders, two people track her down and ask for her help. One is an old childhood friend, thought to be dead, and the Goddess Athenia, who is gravely injured. Lore ties her fate to Athenia's, and with the promise of a mutual enemy destroyed, Lore rejoins the hunt.

This is the perfect book for fans of *Percy Jackson* and *The Hunger Games*. Bracken takes a new spin on Greek mythology, making for a refreshing read and hooking those who may typically not read Greek mythology. This novel keeps you constantly on the edge of your seat, and you will get lost in the story. Full of plot twists, murder, and backstabbing, what's not to love?

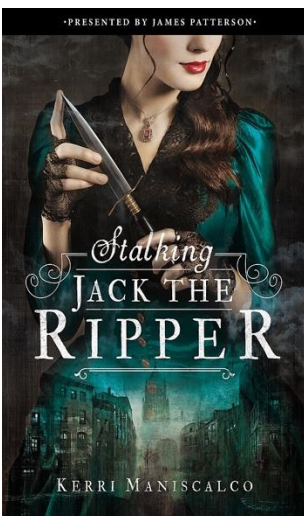


Lovely War

Julie Berry

Set in England during World War II, Aphrodite tells a love story of a girl and boy during WWI. Hazel, a classical pianist, falls for James, days before he is leaving for the warfront. She then decides to join the Red Cross to help the war effort and to be with James. While in the Red Cross, Hazel meets an orphan, Collette, and the two become fast friends. They then meet Aubrey, an African American soldier who was and still is a rag-time prodigy. During a late-night secret music meeting, another relationship blossoms between Collette and Aubrey.

Need a historical romance? This is the book for you. While this may be an overall easy book, it can get heavy and tear-jerky at moments. Trigger warning: some scenes have strong descriptions of life in war, PTSD, sexual assault, racism.



Stalking Jack the Ripper

Kerri Maniscalco

Set in Victorian Era England, *Stalking Jack the Ripper* follows Audrey Rose Wadsworth, the 17-year-old daughter of Lord Wadsworth. Audrey has a secret: at night, she sneaks out to help her uncle dissect humans. Audrey's uncle is a professor and one of the first forensic scientists, and she is desperate to learn from him. After convincing her uncle to let her go to one of his classes, she meets Thomas Cresswell, who shares her deep love for the dead. When an unknown persona murders a series of women, Audrey and Thomas help her uncle determine the cause of death for one of the women. Audrey then realizes she must do everything in her power to stop the killer. Little does she know she's the girl who loves him.

Stalking Jack the Ripper is a four-book series that follows Audrey on murder mysteries. I used to not be a fan of mystery books; however, these books changed my mind. Maniscalco does a fantastic job mixing suspense with action. And her addition of a slow burn romance to the series makes the reader want to scream when the two love interests finally tell each other how they feel.

So COVID's Almost Over – What's Next?

By David Wang

With the COVID vaccine in full swing and many students at Mendon already fully vaccinated, I know many of us are itching to go back to school full time. But what does that really mean?

Going back to school full-time is soon becoming a reality. With some schools in the county already implementing changes, it is likely that we will also be back in person for the 2021 school year. And with the start of the new school year will also hopefully be the elimination of COVID restrictions. I hope by September 2021 we no longer need to stay six feet apart and sit in every other seat. Imagine being able to converse with each other during lunch and having our social lives go back to normal—it may not just be wishful thinking anymore!



Unfortunately, during these one and a half years of hybrid/remote learning, we've developed some habits that may be hard to break. Going back to school all five days might seem like a very exciting thing, but I feel like many of us will be exhausted after all the renewed social interaction every day. After a day of in-person school this year, many of us probably felt tired and overworked. Imagine doing it five times a week! I don't know how all of us were able to stay intact last year before COVID happened.

Also, our sleep schedules might need some fine-tuning. I know many of us – me included – have woken up extremely late during our asynchronous school days. Going back to school full-time means waking up early every single weekday and being at school at 7:40 AM, bright and early. This may be particularly exhausting for some of us, and we're going to have to figure out a way to conserve our energy, especially since we can't take naps in between (and during) our Zoom classes anymore.

And finally, the thing students are probably most excited about – our renewed social lives. Of course, it will be nice to see and mingle with everyone again, but it will get overwhelming quickly. Personally, this year, I found a lot of peace and quiet in my classes due to their smaller size, and there were minimal disruptions during lessons as masks kept everyone from talking. Plus, with everyone separated from each other, I could schedule time to spend with my friends on my own time instead of seeing them every single day. (No offense to any of my friends, being with people is just really tiring sometimes.) Crowded spaces will become crowded again, and social events will become a reality as we begin to take off our masks and actually converse. But we all have our own alone time, and we've been given some extra alone time during this school year as we are separated. Also, I know many of us have changed drastically since March 16th, 2020 (it's like a summer glow-up but ten times worse), and some of us may be scared to open ourselves back up to the public. It was almost as if our face masks in school were a personality cover, concealing our changed selves from the public.



Social events will become a reality as we begin to take off our masks and actually converse.

We're all excited to be going back to how things used to be, but not quite. There are changes that come with reopening, and there are things that we are going to have to get used to once again. There are pros and cons to going back to school full time, and we have to be prepared to face whatever comes our way!¹

¹ Images:
<https://post.healthline.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/woman-sleeping-asleep-alone-bed-1200x628-facebook.jpg>

<https://i.insider.com/59dbc1b77d246b46008b4682?width=750&format=jpeg&auto=webp>

CDC Guidelines Say Vaccinated People Can Finally Forgo Masks

By Piper Wilson

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has done a fantastic job thus far during the pandemic of providing clear and thorough instructions on how to prevent the spread. This time is no different: on May 16th, the CDC announced that fully vaccinated individuals may gather without wearing a mask. However, apprehensive individuals have been taken aback by this message.

One of the main concerns with this announcement is that we have no concrete knowledge as to how long the vaccinations will provide effective inoculation against the coronavirus. Due to the severity of the virus' spread, the FDA had to rush the production and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. The production of a vaccine is conducted and produced in a medical trial. On average, medical trials take 10 years to complete; by contrast, the COVID-19 vaccine was produced and distributed within the past year. This means there has been no studies on the long-term effects of the vaccine. For all we know, COVID-19 could become the new flu, where we must receive new vaccines every year to keep up with new strains. But until further research is conducted, there is no way of knowing how long fully vaccinated people will be able to walk around without catching or passing on COVID.



On May 16th, the CDC announced that fully vaccinated individuals may gather without wearing a mask.

Others are worried about people lying about being vaccinated. Since most businesses are not currently requiring that you show your vaccination card, anyone could walk into the Starbucks in Pittsford without a mask on and no one would question them. Granted, the non-vaccinated individual is putting themselves at risk, but it is still a concern for many people that many are not truthful about their vaccination status.



Private businesses are still legally allowed to require masks.

As of late May, private businesses are still legally allowed to require masks. Some have enforced the continuation of the mask policies, but many businesses – including BJ's and Target – no longer require fully vaccinated individuals to wear masks, enforced by the “honor system”. For some, this may be concerning, but the prospect of not needing to wear a mask is liberating and exciting: it's the start of a return to normalcy.

Fully vaccinated individuals with underlying medical conditions are advised to talk with their doctors before removing their masks. Additionally, public transportation still requires masks – even for those who are fully vaccinated.

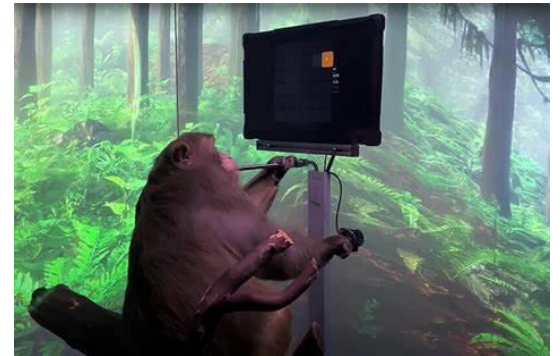
The procedures following COVID exposure is also different for the fully vaccinated. These individuals have a lower chance of contracting COVID-19. Because of this, asymptomatic fully vaccinated people no longer need to quarantine after being exposed, since it is likely they will not have obtained COVID. However, if you show symptoms – vaccinated or not – you are still required to be tested and quarantine.

These new regulations appear to be the beginning of the end. With cases declining and vaccination rates increasing, a “new normal” is rapidly approaching. Perhaps we will learn how fast and loose the “honor system” really is. Or, with these new developments, we will finally be able to resume play on life from before March 2020.²

Reading Minds and Changing Lives

By Vinay Pendri

Scrolling through YouTube, a video of a monkey playing a videogame catches your eye. Clicking on it, you discover the story of Pager, a nine-year-old Macaque, who could be the first step to connecting humans and computers. Pager uses a chip implanted in his brain to telepathically play his game for a sweet reward: bananas. However, this silly-sounding game has astounded the world by the leaps in neurotechnology that it displays. Elon Musk— the founder of Neuralink, the company that conducts Pager's research— makes bombastic claims that "Neuralink's technology will be the new iPhones" (Osorio 1).



Robert “Buz” Cmielewski learning to eat with this prosthetic arms

Similar technologies have the power to transform lives and empower people suffering neurological or spinal diseases. Meet "Buz" Chmielewski, a quadriplegic since his teenage years after a surfing accident. Day after day, Buz had to live without control over his arms and legs until researchers at Johns Hopkins University offered him the opportunity of a lifetime. For the first time in 20 years, electrodes implanted in Buz's skull allowed him to use two prosthetic arms to feed himself with a fork and knife (Sanders 26). This potential to change lives makes research in neurotechnology an invaluable asset in humanity's battle to overcome some of the most painful and debilitating human ailments.

With the possibilities of linking minds to computers, communicating without speech, and triumphing over disease, what are people willing to sacrifice to achieve this magnificent end goal? The answer is the ability to "pull private information or sell personal biometric data for a profit" and use people's private data

for commercial, military, or intelligence purposes (Alcardi 74). There is a growing possibility of manipulating people by finding their innermost desires and thoughts straight from the source: the brain. Concerns have also arisen about the human rights violations that could occur when people mishandle medical or recreational data due to widespread data leakage and information insecurity. Furthermore, the deepening divide between income classes may exacerbate these issues. In 2016, the top five percent of the population held more than "248 times as much wealth than the average middle-class family" (Velasquez-Manoff). Increased opportunity and access to brain enhancing or manipulating technologies could advantage select groups of people. Data could then be used to

² Images: https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/-/media/images/health/1_-_conditions/coronavirus/vaccine-

[hero.ashx?h=500&la=en&mh=500&mw=1300&w=1297&hash=ED466B472CD015FF5CC3288E75EA37EB707B65D3](https://static01.nyt.com/images/2021/06/09/lens/09virus-briefing-vaccine-card-theft1/09virus-briefing-vaccine-card-theft1-mediumSquareAt3X.jpg)

<https://static01.nyt.com/images/2021/06/09/lens/09virus-briefing-vaccine-card-theft1/09virus-briefing-vaccine-card-theft1-mediumSquareAt3X.jpg>

determine people's thoughts, political orientations, or even influence someone's thought process subconsciously; it would remain indistinguishable from one's own thoughts.

It is becoming apparent that the potential for both good and evil in neurological research is limitless. This field's rapid growth amidst a culture becoming progressively linked to personal devices is alarming. Neurotechnology's hypothetical effects on the medical and marketing fields emphasize that neurotechnology has no place anywhere other than where it can be used for positive change.

In response to the wave of skepticism and resistance to developing neurotechnologies, some argue that the harms of mismanaged data cannot be much worse than what happens every day when multi-billion-dollar corporations collect data through people's devices. Although technology develops at a frightening pace, many believe that it is illogical to spread fear because it is unlikely that these technologies will have the capability to do any of the things we fear the most. Skeptics dismiss dreams of cyborgs inhabited by human minds and scanners collecting thoughts as being nothing more than what they are: dreams.



To fight this tsunami of resistance, every person must be conscious of who possesses their neural data and how people use it. Likewise, researchers in the neurotechnology field should be just as vigilant in scrupulously vetting the applications of their research to ensure that access to reality-warping and manipulative technology remains strictly medical. It is essential that scientists continue their work alongside maintaining public trust. This process also requires assistance by international and local policymakers. Politicians must directly address the unpredictable field of neuroethics that holds many unknown variables in the future and has little to no

legislation in most countries. One unexpected possibility is to call on social media giants, like Facebook, who already participate in ethical initiatives like the Human Brain Project. Their influence could be used to police the vast amount of neural data for the betterment of humanity (Alcardi 76). The lack of "one size fits all" solutions accentuates the active effort needed to develop the emerging field of neuroethics (Sanders 26).

Living in an episode of Black Mirror or entering the Matrix may be closer than many expect. However, this beginning of a new age entails meticulous regulation that, if poorly implemented, could lead to disastrous results. We need to step up and make clear that our data is to be guarded as preciously as our minds would be. We can assert the correct place of neurotechnology in our lives. Let life-changing stories like "Buz" Chmielewski's be the first in a never-ending series of neurotechnology brightening humanity's future (Velasquez-Manoff).³

³ Sources:

Mahfoud, Tara, et al. "The Limits of Dual Use." *Issues in Science and Technology*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2018, pp. 73–78. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26597992. Accessed 25 April 2021.

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Images:

<https://buildcreate.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/161117-how-do-you-communicate-deadlines-with-your-website-team.jpg>
<https://www.springfieldwellnesscenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/What-is-Chronic-Stress.jpeg>

The Year-Long Battle with Stress

By Jisu Oh



This year especially, deadlines and to-do lists have created insane amounts of stress.

Three looming deadlines hang precariously over your neck, the blade of a guillotine ready to mark your impending doom. I'm going to fail anyway, you think miserably. What's the point? But then you sigh, heave yourself out of the comforts of the bed, and start typing away to lessen the weight of the never-ending assignments. In the end, you finish what you needed to for a temporary couple of rest days before the Teams notifications start piling back. You're quite pleased with your work. Maybe this works for me, you think, and immediately start to forget the tiring, dreadful pull of guilt and exhaustion you experienced earlier. Instead, you taste

the victory of good grades and a clean, crossed-out agenda in the satisfied click of your tongue—finished.

Stress seems to be a constant factor in life; as a student, tedious assignments and expectations to fulfill are often difficult to deal with. A couple of weeks in Health are spent on stress: learning about the bell curve for optimal stress and productivity, the causes of stress, and how to deal with it. It's quite repetitive of middle school health education, to be honest. You find yourself sitting in uncomfortable chairs and staring blankly at the same presentation for three or four years in a row.

A few things that I've picked up from these repetitive health classes: cortisol is known as the stress hormone, responsible for the body's reaction in the forms of mood, motivation, and fear. Health teachers always try to emphasize that stress—no matter how much the word has become a negative burden—is not always bad. Cortisol increases sugars in the bloodstream, as well as metabolism and memory function, providing a temporary lift in physical and cognitive ability. This positive stress boosts motivation and decision-making.

Unfortunately, the negative effects of stress seem to be more familiar. Chronic stress occurs when the body is placed in prolonged states of stress, resulting in high cortisol levels. Constant and heavy amounts of stress prevent the autonomic nervous system from releasing the relaxation response. Consequently, the body remains at a constant state of physiological arousal, which affects basically every anatomical system. Chronic stress is particularly dangerous in childhood—neural circuits are easily affected by the stress and can be altered to become overly reactive or slow to stop reactions when facing threats.



Chronic stress – long term periods of stress – can prevent the nervous system from providing relaxation.

Strange, serious-sounding names like “chronic stress” may place yet another burden on self-care. Maybe my stress isn't that serious, you might think. I guess I'm just being dramatic, and my stress isn't bad enough to be chronic. This way of thinking results in zero attempts of coping (in a healthy manner!) with stress. Your stress doesn't have to be chronic, or seriously threatening, to be important. Whether your stress is defined as acute or chronic, it is affecting how you live and your health—what's more important than that?

“I’m so stressed” is a sentence that seems to carry through every hallway at school, attached to the mouths of students sharing the overwhelming burden of constant work and expectations to fulfill. When comparing the lessons students have learned since middle school to observations of how students cope with stress, it makes sense why Health is a required class in high school. Not that it does much, though. High school health education is like a hastily pasted gold sticker on the school, a fleeting “you tried” to check off another requirement and move on. But really: what can the school do? Developing a growth mindset—a healthy approach to facing the mile-high wall of assignments and the anvil of pressure tossed onto both shoulders—can be encouraged in schools, but it’s likely that students will sullenly sit with AirPods and easily ignore such reminders.

Ultimately, it’s a student’s responsibility to understand that intelligence is not fixed, and progress is always able to happen. Bad grades and the sick, heavy feeling of not being enough often seems like the uncomfortable weight of an x-ray apron, tossed onto your body as imperfections are scanned and spotted under a scrutinizing gaze. It is crucial to understand that one’s performance—as a student, a son or daughter, and a human—will not stay the same. Development is always able to happen, if one is able to have a flexible mindset; it’s important to acknowledge that there will be depressingly low moments, but it won’t stay like that for long.

The end of school teasingly nears with the month of June—however, the tug of AP exams and finals tighten the leash around your neck—reminding you of the anxiety that’s been following you around for a year. But you manage to finish the last page, crack your knuckles, and seal the test booklet with finality. You feel the warmth of sun as you step outside, relief stretching across your lighter neck and straightened back. It will all pass, in the end.⁴

Crying Into *Lord of the Flies* Again Because No One Is Signing My Petitions

By Angel Tang

Guys, we made it. We actually made it. In all honesty, I did not expect us to get this far. When they said we were going to Zoom for 6 hours every Wednesday, I thought, “this is the actual end” (the Mayans were sadly off by 8 years). But we did it. Sure, with a lot of cameras and microphones off, and I’m pretty sure half my teachers still don’t know what I look or sound like, but all that matters is that we went to those Zoom classes *ahem* wide awake—notebooks and pencils at the ready. So, everyone, select the clapping emoji on that next Zoom call because we did it.

Now, did we do it well?

...No comment.

Let’s do a little year in review, and you can answer that question for yourself.

September 8th, 2020: First day of school. Half of us didn’t even show up. Smh.

Freshmen—they came, they saw, they tried to conquer (you guys will get it one day—or never, seeing how the upperclassmen are faring)

Sophomores—they came, they saw, they conquered, but no one noticed (sadly)

Juniors—they came, they saw, they got conquered, or something, I guess

⁴ Sources:

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/science-behind-student-stress>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/chronic-stress-3145104>

Seniors—they just didn't come...

September 9th, 2020, the first Zoom Wednesday: Was unmuted on accident while watching a YouTube video and now everyone knows I watch Cocomelon.

October 2020: Annual yogi season (this should be a school holiday). My apologies if these dates are completely wrong. This timeline thing is very hard since I transitioned to a 3-day week during quarantine: yesterday, today, and tomorrow (I recommend you guys try it if a 7-day week is too hard, but if you have the stamina and IQ, try sticking to 7 days—its standard for a reason—I'm just too weak to count past 3). I even have the school calendar sitting next to me right now to



Meet Cocomelon—best YouTube channel of all time.

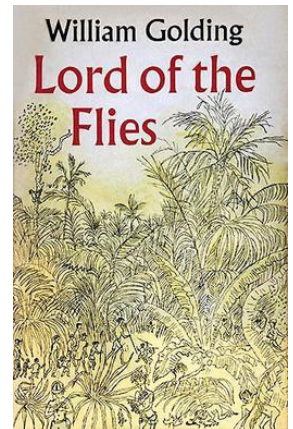
try and make this as accurate as possible, but apparently gym units aren't good enough for the Pittsford school calendar, so I guess I won't be passing Mr. Daggs reliability test, also probably something about me being a "biased" author but that's him not appreciating my craft. But October feels like yoga/monster season, so I'm going to roll with it. (Feel free to analyze the deeper meaning of that—convince your English teacher to award you extra credit for it—shouldn't be too hard, they love a good analysis of meaningless stuff. The foil between Jack and Ralph has me too preoccupied, or I would love to analyze some yoga monster symbolism.)

November-December 2020, where our constant state of mind every single day for 2 months was "school is going to be canceled the very next day." On the other hand, the English teachers' state of mind: better start giving out books because these symbols aren't going to analyze themselves.

Welp, school didn't get canceled. We mourned and dried our tears on the pages of those books, like numerous students before us.

January-February 2021: Idk what happened these few months. No midterms though.

March 13th, 2021, aka the Confusion Anniversary because my brain shut off from that day forward last year: Officially 1 year since school closed. One year and nothing changed, other than the fact that I now had a Lord of the Flies book in my possession.



Still have 50 pages left dried—go me.

March 16th - 26th, 2021: School might be able to go back in person full time. ~ You might be able to see your friends who you haven't seen in a year. Haha jk, COVID is still raging.

March 26th, 2021: The lights flickered after 7th period then the fire alarms went off and IT WAS NOT A DRILL. We were all very confused, but we were also laughing maniacally because we are teenagers with raging hormones and we went outside because all those years of fire drills had been leading up to this very moment where we could finally prove our worth, and then it started raining and it was very windy, and it was just chaos, and all those years of fire drills went to shambles and we proved nothing. Everyone, meet the American school system. I almost thought I could miss English if the alarms kept going long enough and cried tears of joy for once into my Lord of the Flies book (which I had carried around in my backpack for 4 months by that point).

April 2021: Badminton month. My partner and I lost the badminton tournament if anyone cared. Cried into my *Lord of the Flies* book again.

May 10th, 2021: Failed the AP World test. Saw a lot of people who I hadn't seen in a year. Went into shock. Learned there was a Mexican revolution from 1910-1920. Went into shock again.

May 17th, 2021, AM: Failed another AP.

May 17th, 2021, PM: Failed another AP. Doesn't matter which one; it's all 1s across the board anyway.

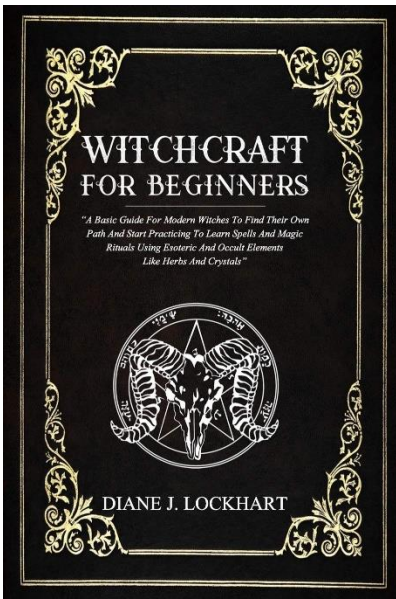
I failed 2 APs in a day because I wanted a challenge (as if I'm not challenged enough already).

After compiling this timeline, I now have one comment: way to go gym for pulling through and pretty much being the same as every other year. The one constant in my life I know I can always depend on.



This was the cause of the Mexican Revolution.

Also, if I have learned anything all these years, it is that the two uniting factors of the world are the internet and knowing everyone in the nation just failed that AP World DBQ and simultaneously enlarged the curve by 5 points. Lemme backtrack. For those of you who don't know what AP tests are, they are 2-3 hours of a monopoly just rubbing it into my face that I didn't learn anything all year. And even though I took the tests at a church, no heavenly figure could have granted me enough knowledge to get any 5s.



The book the AP World test read. We should read it too. Instead of the textbook.

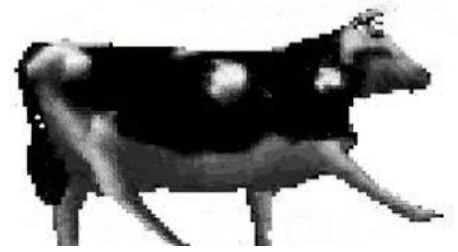
Let's start with AP World because that test left me with the most trauma. I probably took the exam in half the time they allotted us. I wish they let me out earlier so I could have gone home and cried into my *Lord of the Flies* book sooner. My pen also ran out of ink during the test. That's unnatural. When has a pen ever ran out of ink on you? Never. I hereby accuse the AP World test of witchcraft and therefore it should be burned at the stake. (College Board start taking notes) And on more than half the questions on the test, I was thinking of bubbling in letter E in surrender even though AP World only gives you 4 choices for the multiple-choice questions.

- A. World War I
- B. Protestant Reformation
- C. Columbian exchange
- D. Opium wars
- E. I have no clue and have already made peace with the fact that I am getting a 2

E for sure.



Or when you start eenie meenie miney moe-ing on the multiple-choice questions because a nursery rhyme knows more history than you (shoutout to the guy who said a monkey could take the AP Stats test and do better).



Polish Cow Dancing for the uncultured ones out there.

Also, the DBQ prompt. When I saw it, I visibly jumped out of my chair and squealed. I'm surprised I didn't get kicked out because of that. "Examine the extent to which economic factors led to the Mexican Revolution"—that is my senior quote right there. I also realize now I did not talk about economic factors.

My brain when I read the DBQ prompt:

<u>Me:</u>	<u>My Brain:</u>
Where is Mexico??	
	Shhhh. I'm watching a polish cow dancing.
Now I know how teachers feel on Wednesdays. There was a Mexican Revolution?	
	There is now. Y esta es la revelación mexicana.

Spoiler alert, the documents never taught me what it was, but I learned how to write a 5 page essay on something I had never heard of before. That's real-world skills right there.

Also Furthermore, (English teachers are swooning at these transitions) I am highkey regretting not including a key with my essay. Because I abbreviate a lot when I take notes, (and□+, because□bc, without□wo, etc.) I do the same when I write (this whole newspaper article would also be in abbreviations, but the editors would kick me out if I did that, thank them for the fact you can read this piece without a Rosetta stone). Anyway, all of this led to me abbreviating on the actual AP test. I will try to act shocked when I get a 1 on my DBQ. But I did make sure to write out Britain instead of just writing the letter B, okay? Maybe I have a chance at a 2?

And Stats. When you come across a question and it doesn't even seem like it's in English, you try to break it down, but the only thing you understand is the question mark at the end of the sentence. And you even start questioning that. As you can see, the APs have fried my brain to a point of no return.



Meet my best friends JJ and Kiki.

And now that APs are over, I cannot bring myself to do any more school work. It should not be physically possible for someone to spend 10+ continuous hours on YouTube and Instagram, but I am just too talented for this world. It's like my brain has reverted to that of a 5-year-old, and I can no longer focus for more than 5 seconds at a time—unless it's Cocomelon, then 5 hours is not a problem.

All in all, this year went by surprisingly quick. Just yesterday (literally yesterday, I'm talking in the month of May) my Comp Sci teacher was struggling with making a Zoom meeting—the irony. I was strongly doubting her qualifications, but now she even knows how to make it recur. My AP World teacher still doesn't know how to make breakout rooms though. Petition for another year of virtual school so he can figure it out. Shout out to Mr. Yager!

This is also the one school year where you could be marked absent for 9 whole periods just because you didn't press a button. When you wanted to skip school last year but were too scared you'd get caught, so you didn't do your remote attendance this year instead—what a rebel. The headache that came with missing that 12:05 deadline. Or thrill if you're weird.

Now for the thank yous to everyone and everything that motivated me to press that button instead of skipping school. You all are the reason I didn't drop out and therefore have enough content to write this article today.

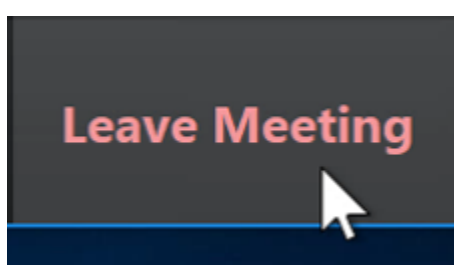
I would first like to thank our sponsor, Microsoft Teams, for truly carrying the whole school year on its back, and for the animations that would play every time I turned in an assignment—they were the only thing motivating me to turn in that remote work.

Thank you blue surgical masks for also sponsoring this school year. Thank you for leaving permanent indents behind my ears, but also thank you for hiding my pimples and my constant runny nose and for giving my brother a mask tan line. Thank you also for the condensation build-up that oiled my face so much I stopped using lotion. Real money saver right there.

And thank you to the teachers, whether they shared their computer sound or we read Othello's lips, whether they knew how to make a recurring meeting or just sent out a new Zoom link every week, whether they figured out how to share their screen or we just nodded along to the map that was supposed to be there, thank you. Thank you to the Maroon cohort for not being there but somehow still existing. Best classmates ever. Thank you to the Gold cohort that was there but only realized masks muffled their voices halfway, unfortunately. Thank you to my computer and my Wi-Fi for dying whenever I had work or a Zoom meeting, but somehow still getting me through the year so I could watch my Microsoft Teams assignment animations with concerning fascination. At least I don't have to go to virtual summer school.



Thank you to the Microsoft Teams unicorn for blessing our assignments.



Aight, see everyone's eyes again next year! Maybe even your mouths if we're lucky. Is it weird if I say I really missed seeing everyone's nose this year? Yes Angel, stop exposing your nose fetish to the world. But don't we all have one at this point? Still, if it makes you feel any better, I really missed your nose this year. Ok, bye!⁵



Behold, the greatest body part of all time.

⁵ Images:
<https://www.amazon.com/Windy-City-Novelties-Sombrero-Authentic/dp/B00JUQZKZ0>
<https://www.today.com/health/stop-plucking-your-nose-hairs-dr-oz-weighs-common-health-t72901>

<https://www.amazon.com/WITCHCRAFT-BEGINNERS-Practicing-Esoteric-Elements/dp/B086B9QXW5>
<https://modernparenting.onemega.com/cocomelon-for-kids/>
<https://tenor.com/view/microsoft-teams-unicorn-microsoft-teams-microsoft-unicorn-gif-17042769>

When the Buzzing Stopped

By Ellie VanHouten

There seems to be a universal reaction that exists in all people wary of insects. I call it the Turtle Maneuver: a sudden scrunch of the neck that positions a slightly tilted head between shoulders, subsequently hunching the torso and freezing the rest of the limbs. Triggered by an immediate detection of buzzing, the Turtle Maneuver is an engrained reflex, embedded in our species ever since we made the association between ‘buzz buzz’ and ‘sharp pointy thing.’

Even though the maneuver is completely useless and unnecessary—besides being utterly humiliating—we can only resume our normal stance after executing a set procedure: The person assuming the position poses the question “Is it gone?” to which a bystander must promptly pronounce the premises clear of the stimulus. Only then can the head emerge from between the shoulders. However, this process must proceed with caution—that meandering bee bobbing merrily over to a nearby flower will viciously attack you if you're in its way.

I started beekeeping last spring, and since then, I've fallen in love with honeybees. A honeybee colony is an extremely fascinating superorganism, with the ability to make complex decisions and operate within a democracy America can only hope to live up to. And because of all the weeks I spent researching in preparation for my first hive—burying myself in notes of ideal box types, number of frames, swarms, feeding times, queen cells, etc.—I became more and more interested in the elaborate workings of the hive and the relationship between keeper and colony.

However, for as much research as I did, bees were still an enigma to me. A colony is so sophisticated, so finely tuned, that even experienced beekeepers must accept the constant element of unpredictability in their practice. There was only so much I could prepare for—I would just have to lay down my six pages of notes, crack open the lid, and see what the buzz was about that very day.

It was experiencing bees that made me fall in love with them. Alone, I would walk along a path through the field that was home to my hive. I would place my tools on the ground beside the two stacked boxes of ten frames each and pull my suit and gloves on. I would light the smoker, watch the curling white puffs of air billow into the blue sky, take the hive tool, and pry open the lid, listening to the sharp cracks of the yielding propolis, the murmuring of the bees as light entered their usually dark home. Warmed by the sun, the hive exhaled the rich, sweet, and slightly acidic tones of the substances it contained. Cells freshly filled with nectar would glisten as I raised up a frame to inspect it, different shades of pollen dotting the outer edges.

I would take my time inspecting each frame, watching the bees bustle about. Sometimes a few would be cleaning spilled honey off another, sometimes one would be face first in a cell (presumably filling it with honey), and on a rare day I would spot a freshly born bee poking its way through the capping, grey and scraggly, ready to join its sisters and their unwavering workforce.



Ellie VanHouten (author) checking the frames of her bee colony.



Smoking the bees.

And yet, my favorite part wasn't what I saw, but what I heard: Buzzing. The humming of thousands of bees, the soft whispers of work. Enveloped in that bubble of buzzing, I felt invisible. Invisible to the point of feeling out of place, like I was an unworthy witness to countless sacred secrets being spilled. Sometimes I would just stand there, watching the bees, listening to their melodies. The buzzing signified a hive that was truly alive.

So that's why I cried when the buzzing stopped. I just stood there, no one to accompany me but the breeze threading its way through the long grass, coming to mourn the dead metropolis, the city void of the inhabitants that made it reverberate with life.

I just stood there. Crestfallen. Looking over my empty hive, watching the few remaining bees picking their way through the dregs of honey. Stood there, a witness to nothing but the silence of mass starvation—a silence that many beekeepers have heard. The bees had let me into their world, but now their world was dead.

Before I started my own hive, I advocated for bees mostly from a material standpoint: If the pollinators die, so do humans. But after experiencing the sacred immersion that's beekeeping, I realized that 'saving the bees' was more than just saving the services they provided humans: Saving the bees is preserving a beautifully intricate society with characteristics and personalities of its own.

And this doesn't apply just to the preservation of bees, but to nature as a whole: Nature doesn't exist solely for our own benefit. However, because we believe we're the 'dominant species,' we are prone to think otherwise, viewing nature as a backdrop to our material whims and fantasies, a landscape ready to be tailored by our touch and suited to support whatever we stack upon it.

But nature isn't our backdrop. Nature exists to keep existing—not to serve one, but support all. In other words, the human species isn't an anomaly. We aren't the dominant species, the apex predators, or the strongest organisms in the world.

If anything, humans are fools. Fools because in the second we've existed in earth's twenty-four-hour history, we've managed to ravage the land, water and air. Fools because we're going to run ourselves and millions of other species into the ground after proclaiming we're the greatest of them all. Fools because we've slowly dissociated ourselves from the planet that birthed us.

We can buy electric cars, use reusable bags, ditch fast fashion, install solar panels, reduce our food waste, turn off the lights, take shorter showers, eat less meat, support environmentally friendly businesses, purchase less plastic, participate in policy making, and do everything in our power to reduce our environmental impact. But most of all, we need a massive mindset shift: Humans aren't anomalies, transcending other organisms in our accomplishments and abilities. Homo sapiens is just another species.

Why do we need to change our perspective? Just pause. Think for a bit. Imagine: What if we used our big brains and opposable thumbs to spread beauty, erase inequality, promote longevity, and enhance our natural world? What if our goal wasn't just preservation, but enrichment? Like a colony of bees, we could work precisely, efficiently, and—most importantly—together to uplift our own people and the rest of the world. Imagine—what if we collectively found this greater, this universal, purpose?

That's why I sigh when I see people flinch at the sound of a bee, scrunching into their shoulders like distressed turtles. Because to me, that buzz is more than a noise. That buzz reminds me of nature's everlasting complexities and characters, reminds me of those swaths of colorful, polka-dotted pollen and that bee cleaning honey off her sister.

To me, the simple act of listening to that buzz symbolizes our place in the world: Participants in mother nature's masterpiece. A masterpiece we have all had the privilege of both witnessing and partaking in. A masterpiece we are all responsible for preserving.

The most astonishing masterpiece that's this buzzing, trembling, thundering legacy of life on planet earth.

An End of the Year Welcome ft. Mr. Madden

By Izzy He and Abby Schwartzman



Mr. Madden, a physics teacher of 13 years who started at MHS this school year.

It was a sunny Wednesday afternoon when we connected with Mr. Madden—Mendon’s newest addition to the STEM department as a physics teacher—over Zoom. Within the span of a year, Mr. Madden has developed a reputation for his positive attitude and never-ending passion for the field of physics. On the interview day, after a review session for an upcoming quiz, we launched into a casual discussion, gaining insight into his life before teaching, hobbies, and the real reason behind why he wanted to major in—and teach—physics (arguably one of the most challenging areas known to man).

What brought you to Pittsford?

I live here! I used to work in Canandaigua and always felt that there was a split between where I lived and where I worked. As a teacher, I wanted to be fully invested in the community I worked

in, especially for my kids. My wife and I applied for two positions here, a speech pathologist at Sutherland and a physics teacher at Mendon respectively. And we got them!

Where are you originally from?

Shoreham, NY (located on Eastern Long Island). This was also where Nikola Tesla’s famous coil was built.

Where did you go to college?

SUNY Cortland

I did my undergrad and grad degrees in physics and math here.

Any Pets?

I do not 😊. Before my wife and I had children, we traveled almost every summer for a couple of months at a time. And we just got into the habit of not having one! My youngest is a puppy lover, so I definitely know that there’ll be a “can I have a dog?” question in the future.

(Abby: You should say yes!)

Do you ever feel tired of teaching physics?

No! Seeing students connect the dots and understand is great. And I’m constantly learning from you guys. Understanding how you process information helps me improve as a teacher for future generations, and it’s very exciting to be able to explain a concept in multiple ways.

Favorite color?

Light blue.

Did you ever do sports?

My main sport in high school/college was ice hockey. I was a forward, both wings, and started playing center my senior year. I also played baseball, which was my main sport for a long time until hockey took over.

What drew you to Physics?

Growing up, I always knew that I wanted to do something involved with science. The trick was narrowing it down to physics. My dad is a computer engineer, and, when I was young, we used to do a lot of projects together (model rockets, cars, radio-building). For me, 8th grade physical science confirmed that science was what I wanted to do. And eventually, when I entered physics as a junior in high school, it became one of those subjects that answered all the big questions, like why the sky is blue, etc. I was drawn to understanding more about the natural phenomena around me.

Why teach high schoolers?

I could take the easy answer out which is that physics is mainly taught in high school. But I also like the age group the most. A lot of the mathematical repertoire that you learn in high school perfectly complements what you learn in physics. On teaching college students, I feel like there isn’t the same sense of community like there

is here—you've all known each other for most of your lives.

What do you love most about physics?

I'm actually going to steal a quote from Richard Feynman (one of my favorite quotes) which is that "you understand the beautiful nature of nature."

One of my biggest interests as a kid was the outdoors, and I've continued this interest throughout my adulthood. To be able to explore and understand the fundamental concepts of nature, well, that's physics in action.

My favorite topic right now is particle physics.

What do you think of quantum physics/physicists? It seems like they're always experimenting with unknown, difficult-to-believe concepts.

A lot of the time, our macroscopic view of the world doesn't match the microscopic level. When you start getting down to the realm of atoms,

it's unpredictable—it doesn't make tangible sense because you can't see it! It's basically described through mathematics. When I took Quantum Mechanics I and II, I just had to reach the mindset of "I'm ok with these predictions not matching my everyday life." It gets to the point where we just have to be comfortable with the uncomfortable—and then we can understand.

This was your first-year teaching in PCSD and during a pandemic as well. How did you feel about it?

I think everyone in education knew that this was going to be a tough year, with students being in class less and the use of remote days. One challenging aspect was the lack of labs. Science is a process and when you take away this process of experimentation, students lack the experience of self-discovery. Thankfully, I've been doing video tutorials for around seven years now. There was no learning curve, and I had a bank of videos ready to go.

Favorite books/movies/shows?

I'm a big fan of Bill Bryson's books (*A Short History of Nearly Everything* and *A Walk in the Woods*). In particular, I like his dry humor (which is similar to mine). I read a lot about exercise physiology; authors like Matt Fitzgerald cover topics concerning good eating habits and the power of mind over body for endurance athletes. I like that he talks about the science behind his claims and pulls on active research. I don't watch a lot of TV, but I do like to watch bike-racing. I'm currently watching the stage recaps of the Giro d'Italia.



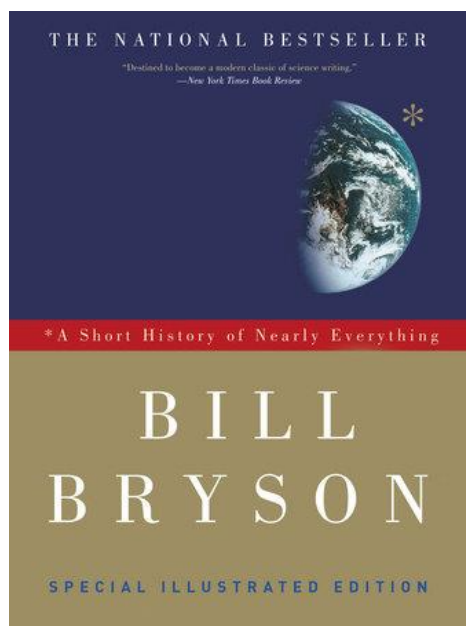
The Giro d'Italia (2021)—a grueling cycling competition!

When I was in college, I was obsessed with the Lord of the Rings series—both the books and the movies. Now, I've drifted from watching movies, but, if I did, I'd reach for a comedy.

What physics related projects are you currently working on?

I'm very involved with QuarkNet, a high school particle physics outreach group I've been a part of for the last 8 years. Right now, we're planning summer workshops for teachers to come in and learn about particle physics. I'm also involved with STEP UP, a program that is pushing to close the gender gap in the field of physics (right now, it's roughly 4:1 male-female). Having two girls of my own (my oldest being very interested in science) makes this mission especially important to me.

As with every class of his we attend, we left the meeting feeling as if our appreciation for physics had expanded just a little more. A huge thank you to Mr. Madden for participating in this interview!



Mr. Matthews,
Thank you so much for always being available after school to go over quizzes writings and speaking's and just being there to talk about life. It means a lot two no your teacher cares about your success and well-being.
-Simon

Mr. Sanderson,
Thank you for making second period fun all year.
-Tyler

Mr. Banister,
Thank you for always being kind and understanding, your class is one of the highlights of my day.

Mrs. Khuns,
Thank you for making this year awesome! Even with all the tech problems :)
-Ahmed Shah

Mr. Welsher,
Thanks for being able to adjust so well in the new system and still being able to teach just everything we need.
-Michael Deplhi

Mrs. Curran,
Thanks really great year! You're really cool :)
-Casey

Mr. Domroes,
Thank you for all that you've done to help me and Molly this year!
-Carter Champion

Mr. Pellegrino,
Hey Mr. Pellegrino, thanks so much her being a great Latin teacher! I'm so grateful that you are my teacher for the past two years!
-Ally Dennis

Mr. Martellota,
Thank you for teaching me despite the conditions of COVID!
-Tianze

Mrs. Slominski,
Thank you so much for all of the nice words during CSE meetings, as well as the college memoir ideas. I also like how you got me interested and Ken as well as your happiness you bring to the class lessons.
-Aidan Parritello

Mrs. Smith,
Thank you for always being positive and staying patient with your students!
-Bella Monaco

Mr Pratt,
There's never a dull moment in auto class.
-Ben Shulman

Mrs. Rister,
Thank you so much for making our class environment so positive and having a class that makes look forward to each and every day!
-Callah

Mrs. Ebert,
Thank you for helping me advance in my Spanish skills and helping me gain confidence in my speaking abilities this year!!
-Cassie Fernandez "Isabel"

Mr. Madden,
You have been such a great teacher during this challenging year. Thank you for helping me with physics, I really appreciate all of the work you put into making our year enjoyable and not over whelming. Have a great summer!
-Jenny Zhao

Mrs. Dietz,
Thank you so much for always making class fun and exciting, even this early in the morning.
-Shopie Khan

Mr. Lindstrom,
Thanks for making class so much fun!
-Camille Burrill

Mr. Kennell,
Thank you for always making us laugh with your jokes and stories, and of course with the pictures of Remy!
-Eris Metros

