



KUNESTONE

FEBRUARY 2020 Edition Vol. 3



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ABOUT THE EDITION

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Only a few months into 2020 and the world is already changing fast. This edition tackles the consequences of climate change, the destruction left by the Australian wildfires, as well as the passing of basketball star Kobe Bryant. A staff interview featuring librarian Mrs. Waldman reveals the importance of reading in the digital age, while AOFTE honors a talented sophomore. Read a couple reviews on two very different films, learn how to maintain your New Year's resolution(s), and more in this first edition of 2020. As always, feel free to submit your work to **pmhsnewspaper@gmail.com**. We would love to feature your voice!

~Izzy He

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Staff Interview Ft. Mrs. Waldman

Interviewed by Ayla Gower

As you enter the library at Mendon, you will likely be greeted by Mrs. Waldman, a welcoming and helpful librarian who loves her work. The library at Mendon is heavily frequented by students every day, so it is only fitting that *The Runestone* interviews one of the hard-working staff members that helps keep this institution running so smoothly. Thank you, Mrs. Waldman!

Q. What is the most requested book to check out?

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas and *Educated* by Tara Westover. *The Hate U Give* is known as a drama, crime genre of book, it is fictional. *The Hate U Give* was inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, while *Educated* is more so a biography & memoir of a strong female character.

Q. Why do you think fiction is more popular than nonfiction?

Fiction is fun to read. There are a variety of plots so there is something for everyone—including fantasy, mystery, realistic books or anything that takes you to another world. Nonfiction can be dryer, takes longer to read and doesn't take you away in the way fiction does. Fiction transports you to another realm so you can completely immerse yourself in said realm.

Q. How do you feel about book censorship?

Book censorship is not appropriate. I believe people should be able to write what they need to write. That being said, I think the publishers are going

to be careful about publishing what sells and what won't offend. It has to be a good work of literature not anybody writing whatever they want to write. Hate issues or bashing other cultures, countries, or people is not appropriate.

Q. Why did you become a librarian?

I love books, I love talking to people about books, hearing about books, and recommending books. I was an English major in college, so I read and wrote my way through school.

Q. If you had to recommend a fictional and nonfictional book, what would it be and why?

A fiction book I recently read was *Beneath the Scarlet Sky* by Mark T. Sullivan, which was a fictionalized true story about someone in World War 2 that had to enlist with the Nazis in order to live through the war, but he was actually a resistance fighter. It was a fascinating story, although he ended up not telling anybody his story until he was in his eighties. The reason behind this long-kept story? No one asked. A nonfiction book would be *Quiet* by Susan Cain which is a classic. The story empowers introverts and how even though you might not speak as much as extroverts, you think more, and you process information differently than extroverts and empowers the idea that it's okay to be quiet. I think most people who are quiet think it's not okay to be quiet, but it is. Their brain just processes information differently.

Q. Do you think we should read more often than we do?

Yes, I think everybody should read way more often than they do. People read a lot now without realizing they



are reading. They all read things on computers, they read on Facebook, on Instagram, they Google things. People are reading differently. It's in short spurts, not long extended novel situations, but people are still reading. I love to see anybody sit down and read a book. I think people feel kind of guilty now if they take the time to sit down and read through an entire book and even for me it's really difficult to find time to read but I think it's something we need to work into our day.

Q. What do you think is most beneficial to read and does it change depending on the person?

A lot of the classics that we have I think are very timeless but will still allow you to stretch yourself as a reader, like The Bronte Sisters or Faulkner or George Orwell. We have a classic section, so anything from those books will kind of push yourself as a reader and still offer you some insight into another world. Also, they are all fiction books, so they are easier to read than some of the nonfiction books, but they still stretch your brain. We are doing a big push in the library for nonfiction books and we have some very interesting but readable nonfiction books. They are sometimes not as easy to put down and pick up as a fiction book would be. I always recommend fiction unless they are specifically looking for nonfiction. Memoirs and biographies are fascinating to read.

We have some very good ones now like Paul Allen's biography, *The Guy Who Invented Snapchat* and some books on Nike. So, very inspiring and gives you an insight on what other people have gone through in their life to become who they are.

Q. Why do you think we shift toward the fiction realm rather than the nonfiction?

I think fiction really takes you away in a way that nothing else can. It's like watching a movie, except your imagination creates a world that's ten times bigger than any movie you can watch. You can create your own characters in your head and your own vision of what that character looks like, and it really gives your brain a chance to think and imagine at the same time you're reading a book. No two people will actually read a piece of fiction and come up with the same picture. I think it really stretches our ability to think and pull in other worlds and really be creative, like really think about how we would create a world or a person or a vision in a totally different way than another person might while reading the same book.

Q. Do you think we should step outside our comfort zone when it comes to reading?

ABSOLUTELY! Most readers love to read fiction, but I would love to see them read some nonfiction. For kids who love to read nonfiction, I always push them toward fiction just to put them off-kilter and challenge them to read something new and different.

Q. What's an interesting fact about reading that you know?

Readers do much better on SAT vocabulary tests than non-readers because they are exposed to so much

more vocabulary words in the course of reading. Generally, those who read are quicker to pick up different languages and information because they are used to looking at words and kind of processing them on their own.

Q. How do you feel when you see students coming into the library and reading?

First of all, I absolutely love to see people in the library, whether you have a book or you're reading a book. I love talking to kids about what they are reading, what they are going to read next, what they liked and disliked about the book, what the plot lines were, and if they related to the characters. So, it's probably my most favorite thing in the world—it just gives me an insight into human nature and what really motivates people and makes them happy. That's the reason I work in the library. To see kids come in with books, and if they talk to me about them? Even better!

Q. Would you change the reading list each grade does in class? Why?

I think I would expand it to a few of the new books we have coming in, which deal with immigrant and diversity issues. I think these topics are very valuable to read. We try and add to the lists every year, but sometimes we order new books in the process of the reading list being created so not all the new books get on the list.

Q. Have you seen a theme between what people are checking out and what they are leaving on the shelf?

Yes, people are checking out a lot of books having to do with immigration and diversity issues. I'm always fascinated to see how books reflect our current culture. For example, fantasy books are big. I always

wonder if there is something going on in our culture that makes people want to step away from reality and go to another world. Right now, I'm seeing a lot of books about diversity, which could include realistic stories, love stories, and fantasy stories. I think that's a theme that people are growing into, and they are kind of figuring out "Do I need to address this? Do I need to make a place in the world that's different than what I have now? How do I include a lot of different friends and reach out to people?"

Q. Do you think what we read reflects how we feel?

I do think there is absolutely a connection. The themes that you get in current books change from year to year, like *The Hunger Games*. When we had a lot of dystopian books hit the market at the same time, you had to wonder if people were viewing our culture as being kind of at war with each other and were unsure about the future or what the government's role was. Now I see that shifting to more realistic books, and those themes are always woven into human relationships. So, in any book, the primary plot is going to be a human relationship and how they deal with whatever is going on in their environment. What's going on in their environment is definitely reflective of our culture. Sometimes it makes me very sad because we have very dark, hopeless books, and I hope for teenagers that is not what they are feeling about the United States and our environment. I like to see hope; I like to think things are going to get better. They will get better.

More Than Just Robots

By Katherine Huang, Maya Sallade, Garrett Wilson, and Sydney Cornell



The starting bell rings and Gemma* takes off. She places a cargo cube in the holding area, but just as she turns around, Big Shaq crashes into her and a shoving match ensues. An energetic announcer excitedly reports a play-by-play of the game, as thousands of spectators cheer in the stands. With twenty seconds left on the clock, Gemma heads toward a see-saw structure and attempts to climb. The crowd goes wild but then gasps in shock as she takes a tumble at the last second, crashing several feet to the ground. Luckily, Gemma isn't too severely injured, because after all, she is a robot in the FIRST Robotics Competition.

Pittsford Panthers Robotics (Team 3181) is a part of the FIRST robotics competition, an international organization that provides opportunities for STEM education for students around the world. Our forty-member team has students from Mendon, Sutherland, Barker and Calkins who are not only interested in engineering, but also business and art. Each year, we get six-to-nine weeks to build a life-size, fully functioning robot that performs required tasks such as lifting cargo, shooting balls, placing hatches and climbing structures required for that year's problem. Then, our robot competes against teams from all over the world at competitions like the Finger Lakes Regional at RIT. These competitions are run like professional sporting events, with themes (this year is Star Wars), team "pit" areas, announcers, scoreboards, and thousands of attendees. It's an exciting experience for both students and spectators, as groups of six robots battle it out on the game field.

The robotics team is about more than just building a robot. The experience of working together to brainstorm, prototype, and perfect a robot not only develops professional skills but also provides a hands-on opportunity to explore STEM fields. Most students planning to major in engineering won't get hundreds of hours working with machining tools, wiring electrical boards, or programming sensors, but Pittsford Robotics members do all this and more. The team operates as a small company, and thus has talented art students who design team apparel and media and a business team that manages tens of thousands of dollars. Through Team 3181, students have promoted STEM in our community at the Pittsford Food Truck Festival, at the Barnes and Noble STEM Fair, and many other exciting events. Through these experiences, we've formed close friendships through the challenges and successes our team has faced.



For the past ten years, Pittsford Panthers Robotics has been the premier robotics club for Mendon and Sutherland students. But more importantly, it has provided us members with the opportunity to pursue our passions, whether in the sciences or the arts, and find a second "family" through robotics. We welcome you to join in on the fun, whether it's by joining the team or checking out our Instagram (@frcteam3181) and website (pittsfordrobotics.org) for fun updates. Be sure to come to our Chipotle Night @ Pittsford Plaza on March 4 (4-8 pm) and the Finger Lakes Regional @ RIT, on March 12-14, to see what our robot will do this year!

*Gemma is the Pittsford Panthers Robotics Team's 2018 robot name

Artist of the Edition: Thomas Spruill

Interviewed by Ellie VanHouten

The Artist of the Edition will feature one freshman, sophomore, junior and senior in each of the four editions of the Newspaper that the teachers of the art department wish to illuminate. Our last edition gave us some insight on Melissa Rosen, a junior who takes advantage of the many art classes offered here at Mendon. This particular edition will feature Thomas Spruill, a sophomore this year, who is currently taking Painting and Drawing One. Hardworking and imaginative, Thomas goes above and beyond in the realm of creativity, many times tacking on additional projects to the ones he pursues in art class.

About the Artist

Undoubtedly, the artist is as important and influential as his/her art, personality, thoughts, and creative process shaping the appearance and the message of his/her pieces. Instead of becoming familiar with just the *piece*, we should connect with its *creator*—only then will we get the full experience of the idea of ‘art’. In this section, we’ll try to get to know our artist-of-the-edition through a few questions.

Do you have any pets, a favorite thing to do outside of school, or a favorite type of music?

I have a Great Dane—she's very large—and her name is Phoebe[!]. Outside of school, I like to do a lot of art, and since I want to pursue art in college, I am trying to get better so I can get into school. I don't really have a favorite type of music, I like whatever—I just have so many favorite types, it's hard to choose.



Phoebe relaxes outside on a sunny day

In general, what inspires you?

I just really like to see other artists' work—I think that is the most inspiring thing. Or just different movies and shows that have cool visuals.

What kind of art do you most identify with or feel a connection to?

I like things that are vibrant, like neon colors. Or in general, nice colors that go together.

Do you have a favorite medium?

I like to use watercolor paints, but I also try a lot of different art mediums, like digital art, where I can use my iPad and Apple pencil to create things.

If you had the chance to create your dream project, what would it be?

Maybe some sort of animated film, with cool visuals. I am just inspired by animation in general, so it would be fun to create something along that line.

About the Art

Now- drum roll, please- it's time for the art! We asked Thomas to pick one of his favorite pieces that's he's created during his time at Mendon to present in this edition. He chose a colored pencil drawing, portraying a close-up of bubble wrap with beads scattered on the surface.

“Bubble Wrap with Beads”

What was the prompt for this piece, and what was your creative process behind it?

Basically, we were all given a little jewelry box that we had to fill with a few items, and then we had to “take a picture and zoom in” on a certain section and draw it. There was really no reason behind the section I chose, I thought it would just look cool to show the reflections of the bubble wrap. To create it, first I blocked out spaces where I would draw the bubbles in, and then I went in with the lightest colors and added dark on top of those, ending with the shadows in the folds of the plastic. I left certain places white for the reflection part, and from there I drew the beads.

Did you have a favorite part to create, or how it looks?

I really liked when near the end we got to use the colorless blender—they look like wooden colored pencils but with opaque tips. I also liked the striations in between the bubbles, because it makes it look like it is stretching and bending.

Would you do anything differently if you had a chance to re-create it?

I would try to do something different with what was actually in front of me; instead of drawing what I saw I would try to add in different colors to create depth and make it pop. Or just in general, things that would not make it completely realistic. I normally don't draw super realistic things— I guess this is the closest to realism I can get. I also really like it because you normally wouldn't think of bubble wrap as something interesting, but it's cool to see how it can bend into different forms.



Thank you, Thomas, for taking the time to answer our questions, and congratulations on being chosen! To the readers, feel free to stop by the Art wing to see some more of Thomas's work on display, as well as many other extremely creative pieces.

Sophomore Class of 2022 Interviews

Interviewed by Meg Pardee and David Wang

This school year, Runestone will be interviewing students from all four grades for each of its four editions. So here we go again, but this time, with the sophomores.

What is your favorite class, and why?

✓Human Anatomy and Physiology I has been my favorite class because it's very interesting and fun to learn about human body systems. We talk about muscles, bones, tissues and more. It's a very exciting class and we don't get a ton of homework. We do fun labs and watch videos about the human body. Plus, Mrs. Holliday makes the class even better and always keeps the class fun and exciting. It's a great course for students interested in medicine, like me, but it's also fun for someone who likes to learn about biology.

✓Animation: It has a very laid back and relaxed environment. We learn a bit about computers because we use them for interesting projects where we use lots of different types of materials. Mrs. Curran is a great teacher and is super helpful and nice all the time. We also learn about how animating works which gives insight on how movies are made.

✓English 10H, because honestly, *Julius Caesar* isn't that bad.

✓Physics, because it's fun and interesting.

✓Painting and Drawing: There's different styles and techniques to learn as well and new media to try. Mrs. Q is amazing and helps create a warm and welcoming environment. Some of the projects we work on require the use of paint or colored pencils to familiarize ourselves with new media. This allows us to expand our art skills and broaden our horizons.

✓Symphony Orchestra, it's really fun and chill, even if it is stressful at some points.

✓Wind Ensemble because it helps me de-stress and it's also fun

✓Chemistry, because Mrs. Houlihan keeps us all really engaged. And even though I sometimes really don't want to be in lab first period on Tuesdays, she (and the other interesting people in the class) keep it interesting (ex. rotten banana).

What subject do you think prepares you most for life after high school? Why?

✓English because it is important to be able to write professionally and successfully.

✓Art, because I think it's going to be an important part of my future life, even if I don't go to college for it.

✓I think business will help me in my future life; it's already helped me make some really important decisions already!

✓Tech, because...it's always nice to know how to fix things when they break sometimes!

What has been your biggest challenge this year?

✓The biggest challenge I've faced this year was getting sick multiple times, even during the weekend before midterms.

✓Trying to balance school, volunteering, swimming, and violin at the same time has been...emotionally exhausting. I really try my best, but everybody needs a break sometimes, right?

✓Trying to keep my grades up through Spanish 3H has been tough. I try really hard and I know it's important, but sometimes, I just don't get it.

✓Adjusting to the new work style as a sophomore and high expectations.

What's the biggest surprise you've gotten this year?

✓I wasn't aware of when the club yearbook pictures were, and then they just sprung up like "hey, by the way, we're taking pictures the week after Christmas break." They didn't even account for us having after school lab, but I guess it's hard to do that kind of thing.

✓I did get this virus on my home laptop that basically deleted one thing from my Office 365 every day. I caught it pretty fast, but not before it deleted most of my 9th grade files. RIP my 9th grade English Shakespearean sonnet.

✓The entire health class thing. To be honest, health class first semester ended up being way more useful than I thought it was going to be. Thanks, Mr. Hedler.

How do you like to spend your free time?

✓I like to spend my free time watching YouTube on my phone, or binge-watching Disney+ on the TV next to my bed. Sometimes I do it while I'm doing homework, but that's a bad idea. One time I was doing homework while watching YouTube and fell asleep in the most uncomfortable position ever.

✓I like to draw and animate. I spend a lot of time drawing new concepts that I can animate, and I also spend a lot of time on my computer trying to animate those concepts. It's really relaxing, but also kind of stressful at the same time.

✓I like to compose music. While I could get into the depths of my brain, I'll just say that I like to compose action-type piano music. It sounds pretty cool, almost like film music.

Rainbow Classic 2019: The One Where We All Went Wild

By Libby Merkel

There are lots of things about Pittsford that make us stand out in the community. One could go on about our athletics program, our academic opportunities, and the environment within our school – but perhaps one of the most unique and most impactful pieces of our culture is the Rainbow Classic.

As many in the community know, the Rainbow Classic honors the lives of Katelyn Pasley and Ryan McCluski, both Pittsford students who received treatment at Golisano Children's Hospital. Although the circumstances surrounding the event's founding could perhaps be perceived as somber, the Rainbow Classic has evolved into something which brings together our community and which truly makes a difference.

Together this year, we raised \$30,250 – a commendable amount. But, of course, the Rainbow Classic wouldn't be the Rainbow Classic without a healthy dose of competition. The student sections of the stands were packed to capacity, with hardly any room to sit. The Mendon and Sutherland students traded chants and taunts throughout both games. And, of course, Mendon swept, adding to a streak of dual victories beginning in 2017. The girls dominated their game with a win of 71 – 49. The boys' game was a far closer match, ending with a 49 – 43 victory for Mendon. All in all, the 2019 Rainbow Classic was decidedly a victory not just for Mendon—but for our community as a whole.



Climate Change is Not Just an Elitist Issue

By Remy Commisso



The Mura tribe on unmarked indigenous lands
Photo Credit: telesurenglish.net/news/Mura-Indigenous-Tribe-Vows-to-Protect-Sacred-Amazon-Land, 1 March

Through talking with people and combing through the news and social media, I have found that many people believe that climate change is an elitist issue; that they don't have to care because they haven't experienced hardships regarding global warming, and in a way they are correct. In our community, upstate New York, climate change has not hit as hard. We have consistent weather and our lifestyle is not completely dependent on climate, but we can still see the effects of climate change. We see it with devastating natural disasters, diseases caused by pollution; changes in ecosystems, unclean water and air, and even in the rising tides of Ontario Lake. So no, it's not really *our* issue, it's not even *America's* issue. This is the whole world's problem. This is a world crisis.

Just hours from home is the South Bronx, where kids have the highest rate of childhood asthma in the country. It's also no secret that 49% of kids are living below the poverty line. Some asthma is genetic, but most is caused by the unclean air that the people breathe. The South Bronx is an island in the middle of three highways. The air pollution is horrible, caused by pollen, dust, and mold that is trapped in the geographically-centered space. What makes the pollution worse is the increasing ground-level ozone caused by gas emissions and factories. Consequently, many adults as well as children are hospitalized each year from asthma attacks. Death from asthma is not common but is still possible. Some of the poorest people in New York City area also suffer from the health consequences of climate change. For years companies have polluted low-income areas because they know that the people in those areas don't have the political or economic power to fight back or to stand up. This problem doesn't only occur in the Bronx; poor communities across America like Flint, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey experience similar adversities daily. If America is one of the wealthiest countries, imagine what living in an economically unstable country is like.

Just months ago, the Amazon fires started and soon after, the Australian bushfires began. With a drier climate caused by the rise in temperature, the fires are able to spread faster, releasing greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, which trap heat. In Australia, it's estimated that 25 people have died and billions of animals have perished. In Brazil, indigenous people have taken the worst hit. 98% of indigenous lands exist within the Amazon. Even without the fires, indigenous people are displaced and killed at times by logging and agricultural companies. And now their homes have been burned. It's even worse for the uncontacted tribes who have zero protection under the government. This amount of deforestation doesn't only happen in Brazil, but is also present in other countries like Haiti, where the mountains that used to be covered with greenery and trees are now dry, empty lands.



Fires blaze near Lake Conjola (New South Wales)
Photo Credit: nytimes.com/2020/01/10/world/australia/bushfire, 1 March

If these communities don't matter to you, let's take a look at a problem that will directly affect you and everyone across the U.S: the origins of our food. Scientists believe that farmers suffer the most economically from global warming. Because of their hardships, the prices of fruits and vegetables will rise within the next few years. Global warming not only causes the temperature to rise, but also sets up longer dry seasons. Droughts are becoming more common and, at the same time, flooding episodes increase because of rising sea levels. Not only

will livestock have a hard time adjusting to new temperatures, but high heat in the summer can be a safety hazard for farmers working outside. Climate change will revolutionize our diets, therefore affecting what we eat, where it comes from, and our freedom to choose our food.

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Global warming will change the routine of our everyday life. People are already dying from the impact we've created. No one can reverse the damage but *us*. It truly has to be a group effort. *Together* we have to change our habits and our comforts. Be aware of the products you buy, where they are made, and if they are created through deforestation or by polluting our oceans and air. Buy less plastic and animal products. It's these small but mighty changes that make all the difference.

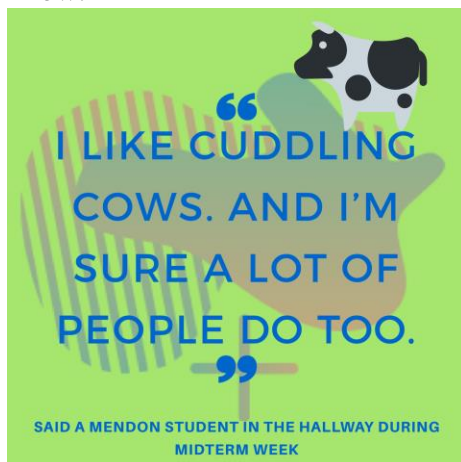
People complain and worry about the cost that The Green New Deal would have on us, or the new paper bags at Wegmans. But this cost is nothing compared to the time that is running out. The price we pay for poisoning the planet will keep on getting higher. And living is priceless, be you rich or poor.

Freshman Perspective Pt. 2: How to Hibernate 101

By Angel Tang

So I'm back. From what? Midterms. Just typing that word gives me more anxiety than worrying about my phone ringing in class. Besides midterms, the county also requires health classes to teach stress-relieving techniques. If that's not hypocrisy, then I don't know what is. Here's my stress-relieving tactic: instead of counting backward from 10, taking a deep breath, and repeating the process, I suggest counting backward from 10, throwing your homework into the recycling bin (so we can relieve stress and save the environment at the same time) and repeating this process until the desired effect is achieved. Or until you run out of homework. Even though we all know that's never going to happen, I still find this method extremely helpful. (Not for my grades per se, but my stress level is as low as them!)

So yes, I survived my first high school midterm week. How, I'm not so sure. As a freshman, I only had two midterms, global and math. I actually studied my butt off for global and felt like a literal historian after my five-hour study session the day before the test because we all know that procrastination is my actual name. Even with that studying, I still failed. I blame the hand cramps I got from that Enduring Issues Essay. Also, not only were my hands dying from soreness, I had tennis practice the day before the test, so my whole body felt like it had been used as a massive stress ball. So I was really sore all over, and kept squirming in my seat while I took the global exam; it probably looked like I was doing a dance routine from Just Dance very inaccurately, or that I needed to go to the bathroom really bad. Honestly, I was so wired up, I should have passed out, but I guess some higher power was determined I suffer through that test. Anyway, that essay can go write itself. Or that higher power can go write it. And then maybe they'll understand our pain. Eureka! The teachers should take the test. And then maybe they'll understand our suffering (which you must follow the Eightfold Path in order to relieve. See, told you I studied). But they'll probably still administer the tests. It's worth a shot, you know.



And then math. Ah, dear sweet math. Maybe it was because my mind was too crowded with history facts and figures, but for the life of me, I could not math during my test. I multiplied -5 and -1 and got 6 . $6!$ What's worse, I started using my hands to help me math. For another problem, I had to add six and one. I counted out six fingers, then added one. Luckily, I could still count, and got seven. But don't worry; I hid my fingers before people started staring and questioning my mental stability. Thinking back on it, I did have a calculator throughout the whole test. Why I didn't use it is beyond me. So is the answer to -5 times -1 .

So, I've decided: I'm hibernating next winter. This way, I won't have to take midterms next year. It's a win-win: sleeping and no tests! Why humans don't hibernate is the real question we should be asking. They should teach that in bio: how to hibernate

The Rise of Skywalker: A Review

By Sarah Dailey and Sophie Bucciferro

On December 20, 2019, the conclusion to the Skywalker Saga was released. This came after the controversial *The Last Jedi*, released in 2017, which divided Star Wars fans over decisions made by director Rian Johnson. The main points that had split the fandom were the chemistry between Rey and Kylo Ren, the Holdo Maneuver (a tactic involving sending a ship into hyperspace to destroy enemy fleets), and the reasoning behind Luke's disappearance. This led to arguments that decreased the chances of the sequel trilogy's success. For the conclusion of the saga, Disney brought back the director of *The Force Awakens*, J.J. Abrams. This created hope among the die-hard fans that there could possibly be a satisfying conclusion. While the movie was good as a stand-alone adventure, it was unable to pay homage to all the history that had come before it, therefore rendering it an unsatisfying conclusion.

The movie sees the return of old characters as well as new additions to the cast, though many of these characters served little purpose and seemed to be added only to move the plot along. The plot was rushed, with too many aspects to cover in the span of a single movie. At times, the plot was convoluted and choppy, leading to confusion among fans. Some of the characters that had been seen in previous movies appeared completely different from how we had seen them before. Though the actors did well with what they were given, their lines were choppy and altogether unrealistic, as the plot is based on overly convenient events. In addition, there are plenty of plot holes, leaving many unanswered questions. *The Rise of Skywalker* was supposed to be the end of the Skywalker Saga, a 9-movie epic that has lasted for 40 years. This unsatisfying conclusion has led to further disputes between the die-hard fans, who had been hoping for a satisfying conclusion to the saga, despite the mixed reviews for the previous two movies. The movie also delves further into the powers of the force, as well as Rey and Kylo Ren's connection, though some fans debate the plausibility of these new powers, many of which do not operate within the parameters set by previous movies.



Photo Credit: starwars.com/films/star-wars-episode-ix-the-rise-of-skywalker, 1 March



Photo Credit: auburnpub.com/blogs/citizen_pop/star-wars-the-rise-of-skywalker-is-what-happens-when/article, 1 March

Another common observation about the sequel trilogy is that the movies, directed by Rian Johnson and J.J. Abrams respectively, seem more like a series of contradictory e-mails from one director to another, given the many contradictions between the three movies. For example, much of what director Rian Johnson did in *The Last Jedi*, which faced criticism from fans, was retconned in *Rise of Skywalker* in an attempt to pander to the fans' interests and gain their support. This was a common theme throughout the newest installment of the Skywalker Saga, as fans' requests and opinions were put above good plot and characterization, leading to a choppy and rushed plot. However, the movie's plot could have been impacted by writer Chris Terrio, who worked on *Rise of Skywalker* before leaving because of "creative differences."

We also see the return of the Emperor, who was commonly used in the trailers to spark excitement for the movie. Although many fans were excited for the return of

such an iconic character, it felt like the studio was only bringing him back for the nostalgia, not for the story. This further confirmed fans' thoughts on Disney not having an overarching idea for the sequel trilogy's plot and story direction. We personally feel this was another tactic to bring in more money for the ever-growing company.

Furthermore, this is the first adventure on screen where the trio (Rey, Poe, and Finn) work together. In the Prequel and Original trilogies, the trio of good guys met in the first movie and worked together until the last. This was another thing fans' disliked about the sequel trilogy that the three main characters didn't work together until the final movie. This is another example of how J.J. Abrams attempted to please the fans, cramming as many shots with Rey, Poe, and Finn into the movie as possible, even if the storyline suffered.

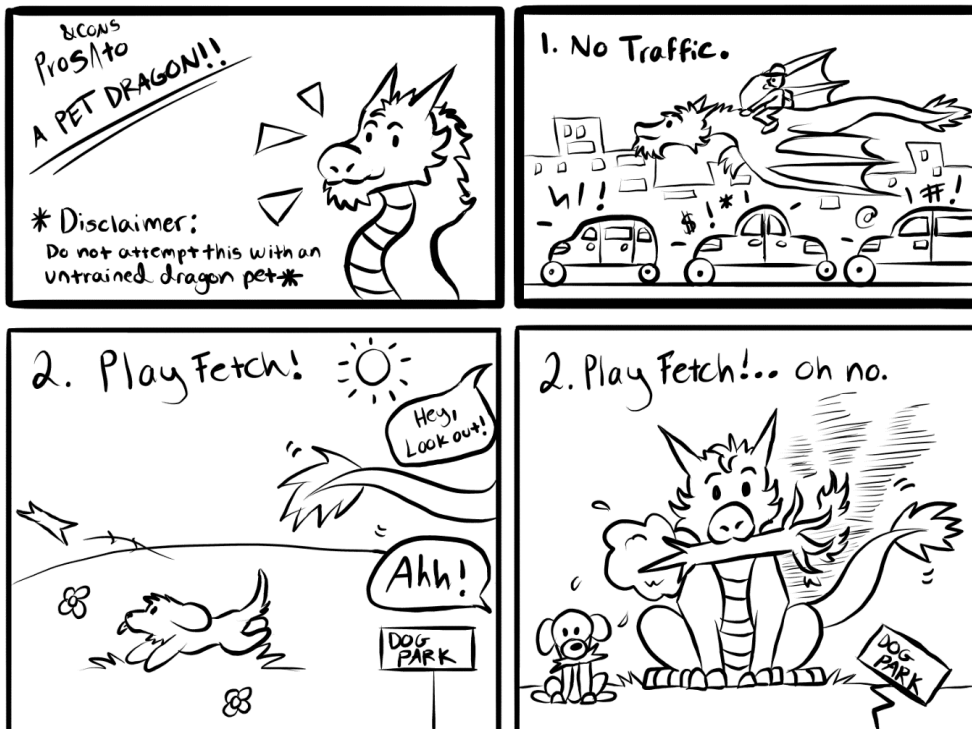


Photo Credit: [imdb.com/title/tt2527338/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2527338/), 1 March

Although the fandom cannot agree on the decisions made by J.J., one thing they can all agree on is the CGI. All the way from the return of Carrie Fisher to the recreation of the ruined second Death Star, it is clear that Disney put time into the FX of the movie. The movie also brings up an important theme: you are not your parents. To us, this is a very important message to give to people who feel like they're constantly in the shadow of others. We all make our own way in this universe, whether it is a galaxy far, far away, or right here on Earth.

Plot-wise, we feel like the movie focused on the fans' opinions more than the actual story. From the return of old characters only to have little aid in the plot, to the new revelations in the force, the film was made to satisfy everyone, and yet satisfied only a small portion of fans. As people who have grown up with the series, it hurts to see the thing we value so highly fall so quickly. Although we have to agree that the CGI and lightsaber combat scenes were amazing, that does not make up for weak plot or characterization.

All in all, the movie was action-packed and full of jokes, creating a good time for all. Still, there were a lot of problems and plot holes. New as well as old characters were only used to move the story along, and there were no clear explanations for major plot points, leaving fans to speculate. Personally, we feel like it was a good movie, but as die-hard Star Wars fans, it could have been a better one, especially since it has been labeled the end of the Skywalker saga.



Comic by Emma Smith

Kobe: The Loss of a Legend

By Izzy He

Sunday, January 26, of that year marked a tragic day for the world after a helicopter crash was announced near Calabasas, California. Heavy fog contributing to low visibility made it difficult, for the pilot to reach the planned destination: Mamba Sports Academy. What should have been a common ride soon turned into a horrific accident; on the way to his daughter Gigi's basketball game, Bryant's "Mamba Chopper," a helicopter that had been a large part of his commute for over a decade, crashed with Kobe, his daughter Gianna, and seven people on board. There were no survivors.

Flying conditions were far from perfect. In fact, the National Weather Service office had previously warned the nation of dense fog and low clouds. Bryant's pilot, however, was none other than Ara Zobayan, an experienced pilot who was undoubtedly familiar with the ups and downs of weather in the Los Angeles area. He was also the pilot for Bryant's final Lakers game. But no matter the amount of training or experience, accidents can and will happen.

It wasn't long into what should have been a short flight that unusual circumstances began to appear. After hovering over Glendale for around 20 minutes, Zobayan made contact with the Burbank Airport, where one controller instructed the pilot to continue flying until the helicopter reached the State Route 118 Freeway. The flight was granted Special Visual Flight Rules clearance, allowing them to fly through Burbank even though the area was experiencing heavy fog. The flight continued, then making contact with Van Nuys Tower, which promptly ordered the flight to be directed towards another controller. By then, the helicopter had reached an unusually low altitude that made communication with the final air-traffic controller difficult.

It was at 9:47 AM when local authorities received a call about a sudden brush fire within Calabasas' hills. 61-year old Scott Daehlin was one of the witnesses present at the scene of the crash, as well as the person who alerted emergency services. He recalled a large thud, followed by the sight of smoke and fire. But when help arrived, there was little to be rescued from the wreck.



Art by Diane Nguyen



Kobe with daughter Gigi, his beloved "Mambacita"
Photo Credit: [tmz.com/2020/01/27/kobe-bryant-trademark-mambacita-nickname-gianna-gigi/](https://www TMZ.com/2020/01/27/kobe-bryant-trademark-mambacita-nickname-gianna-gigi/), 1 March

Having entered the NBA directly out of high school, Kobe Bryant imposed his presence on the court early on. As a shooting guard for the LA Lakers, he remained on the team for twenty seasons. Bryant won five NBA Championships, was an 18-time All-Star, and received NBA's title of MVP in 2008. At the age of 34, he became the youngest member of the NBA to reach 30,000 career points. He was also well-respected for his diligent nature and hard work. Byron Scott, the former head coach for the Lakers, had once discovered Kobe shooting in a dark gym a few hours before practice would start. A decorated athlete and loving father, Bryant retired in 2016, but would soon establish his Mamba Sports Academy a couple years later. This institution sought to train young athletes to harness the "Mamba Mentality". Bryant saw this

creation as an opportunity to pass his passion and knowledge of athletics onto future generations. Although retired, he wouldn't stop working.

Even with his passing, Bryant's legacy will no doubt continue. His wife, Vanessa, and daughters Natalia, Bianka, and Capri are currently advocating to further Mamba Sports Foundation's reach to continue Kobe's life work. Fellow athletes Shaquille O'Neal and LeBron James have been handed the torch as well. Bryant and O'Neal have long been an iconic duo as well as supportive of each other, even if they haven't always gotten along. Shaq, like an uncle to Bryant's kids, said in a recent interview that he'll do "whatever [the family] needs", and that they need only to "call [him] up." In an Instagram post, O'Neal expresses his disbelief and horror upon hearing the news of Bryant's passing, exclaiming, "IM SICK RIGHT NOW". Likewise, James states in an Instagram post honoring his dear friend that "I promise you; I'll continue your legacy man!" and hopes Bryant will "give [him] the strength from the heavens above" to achieve this. As a tribute to Kobe, James and teammate Anthony Davis both received tattoos of a black mamba encircling the numbers 24 and 8 (his previous jersey numbers). Underneath the art, it reads "Mamba 4 Life".

"Life is too short to get bogged down and be discouraged. You have to keep moving."

~Bryant 2008

Even if you have never seen one of Bryant's games or don't consider yourself a fan, there is no denying that the world has suffered a loss of a talented and well-loved individual. While we may never know how he felt in his final moments, I am sure that the tenacity and compassion demonstrated by the "Black Mamba" throughout his life was exhibited right before the crash—by rushing to protect his young

daughter and the people around him.

Australian Wildfires

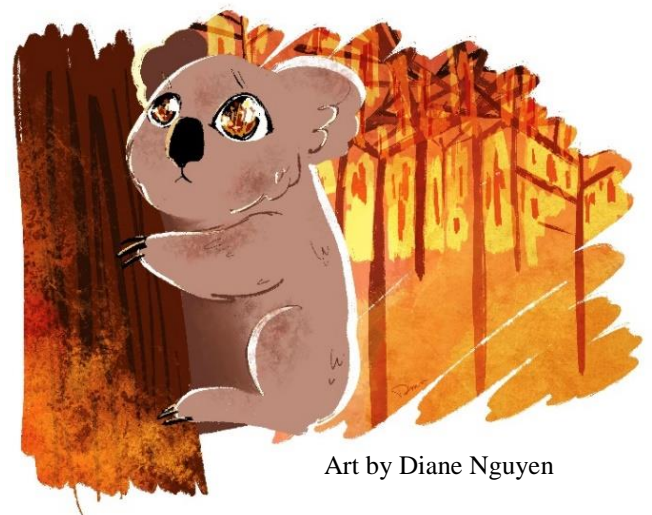
By Sophia Izzo

The massive wildfires in Australia have been in the news for months. The catastrophic effects on wildlife, relief workers, and those living in the areas where the fires are the worst are anxiety-inducing for many others in the world who feel as though we can only stand by and watch. Here are the facts as they stand now.

What was the cause of the fires and what is their impact?

Here's the thing—Australia has always had bushfires. Their fire season begins in late July, often starting when lightning strikes dry bush, then growing as embers move with the wind. However, human error occasionally starts bushfires. They range in size from the size of a house to as large as a neighborhood. Some flames can be contained within a few days, but huge fires the size of a hectare (about 2.5 square acres) or more may still be burning for many months later.

The state of New South Wales has been hit the worst. 2,000 homes have been destroyed and five million hectares of land have burned, including national parks. Australia's capital, Canberra, is close to some of the worst areas. Two people and 25,000 koalas have been killed on Kangaroo Island, although animals all over the country are affected. Overall, total casualties for the country number around 33 and over 11 million hectares of land have burned (the 2019 Amazon fires were 7 million hectares, in comparison).



Art by Diane Nguyen

How is it now?

As of the beginning of February, a total of fifty fires were spotted burning throughout Southern Australia. Over one thousand firefighters are attempting to slow the spread of the flames in New South Wales. Both Victoria and Canberra have placed emergency warnings and given fire authorities extra powers to quell the spreading flames. Other countries, including the US, have sent auxiliary troops and firefighters. The military is also in the area to assist with evacuation efforts. Unfortunately, the hot, dry weather is likely to continue. Experts say that the fires are unlikely to ever go away completely, especially because temperatures have yet to peak.

What are the implications?

Many fear that destruction on Kangaroo Island, a unique and diverse habitat, will permanently alter the homes of multiple endangered species. Other endangered frogs and birds that live in specific areas hit by the fires are at high risk. Koalas, while experiencing population and habitat losses, are more spread out throughout the country. Half a billion animals have been affected and millions have died. Smoke pollution from the fires not only contributes to climate change but can travel thousands of miles as well, negatively affecting the air quality in major Australian cities.



December 2019: Firemen work on smothering the growing flames in New South Wales

Photo Credit: [latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-12-31/raging-wildfires-trap-4-000-at-australian-towns-waterfront](https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-12-31/raging-wildfires-trap-4-000-at-australian-towns-waterfront), 1 March

How does this connect to climate change? Higher temperatures in Australia mean that dry seasons and droughts are longer and more frequent. Given these conditions, this raises the likelihood of fires appearing. 2019 was Australia's hottest year on record. A weather system over the Indian Ocean, known as the Indian Ocean Dipole, results in wet conditions in East Africa and dry conditions in Australia. This year, the temperature difference between these two areas is greater than usual. Temperatures last December in some parts of Australia were between 110-120 degrees Fahrenheit. High winds are worsening conditions as well. This is a very real example of the correlation between climbing temperatures and worsening natural disasters.

What should we do next?

Donate to organizations that are on the ground helping those affected, like the Australian Red Cross, NSW Rural Fire Service, and WIRES Australian Fire Rescue. Most importantly, we cannot sit silently as a country burns. Speak out for climate action that will lessen the intensity of natural disasters like these for the future. Rising temperatures will continue to worsen fire conditions in the years to come. The planet deserves youth willing to take charge to protect it.



Cats: A Comprehensive Guide on How Not to Adapt a Musical to a Motion Picture

By Libby Merkel

Whether or not you're a musical theater fan, you've most likely heard of *Cats*—Andrew Lloyd Webber's somewhat bizarre musical production which centers around a tribe of “Jellicle” cats who seek to ascend to the “Heavyside Layer” and be reborn into a new life. A perhaps lesser known fact about the musical is that the majority of its lyrics originated from a 1939 collection of poems by T. S. Elliot entitled *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. These nonsensical poems serve as a basis for the equally nonsensical show. That being said, there is something rather charming about the show's origins. And, although I have admittedly not seen the show myself and the soundtrack doesn't necessarily appeal to my tastes, I have a level of respect for the famous stage costumes and choreography which contribute to the show's appeal. The same, though, cannot be said for the movie adaptation.

Where to start? At this point, likely everyone has seen the trailers. The CGI in this movie was remarkably disturbing. Unlike the show, the actors were not in heavy makeup, which implied cat-like features, or in costumes which gave hints as to their characters. In fact, some of the cats were not in costume at all. Rather, they had furry CGI humanoid bodies with the advent of ears and tails, with human features pasted onto the face. There was no real effort to feline-ize the actors' features, resulting in a disturbing shift from cat to human. Efforts were made to alter the feet into something more reminiscent of paws, but the hands were left relatively untouched by CGI. The shift from fur to flesh on the hands was a bit jarring, as it was the only perceivably human thing about the cats – even the human-cat faces were tinted the color of each individual cats' fur. Nothing really tied the various aspects of the CGI together—other than, of course, their potential for nightmare fuel.

Putting aside the visuals, the plot was equally all over the place. From what I can tell, the original musical makes it very clear that the show is an ensemble one, focusing on its eclectic cast of cats with feature songs and dances. Although there is a sort of plot, the idea is more to induce a wild and enjoyable experience. This sort of show doesn't seem like the type that would translate well to the screen. In movies, we expect, the majority of time, a linear plotline. When it is not straightforward, it can typically be reconceived in a more palatable linear fashion, or dismissed as an artistic choice. *Cats* managed to circumvent comprehensibility in a remarkable feat of writing. There was an attempt to give a show without a determinable protagonist or a sympathetic main character. The writers attempted to accomplish this by bringing Victoria the White Cat to the forefront. In the original musical, Victoria does not even have a singing solo, although she does have a prominent dancing role. But bringing Victoria to the forefront does not make the story any better. *Cats* (the movie) keeps the majority of the cats' songs—the most notable difference is that Victoria is sloppily worked into the plot and songs. Her presence serves no real purpose. She doesn't clarify the plotline for movie-goers, nor does she have a particularly compelling personality. She is just there—bland, and utterly useless.



Art by Diane Nguyen

Of course, there were many other issues with *Cats*. At one point, Rebel Wilson’s cat Jennyanydots unzips her bare fur to reveal another layer of fur, complete with a party dress and sequins. The scale of the background and props to cats was grossly inconsistent. There are also human/cockroach hybrids at one point, which are just as horrifying as they sound. But more than the bizarre parts, this movie was simply bad. It was visually disturbing, yes. But to top it off, it was disappointingly uninteresting. Other than the catchy music (which can be found quite easily on a visual-free album), this movie was an utter drag. Feel free to watch this movie ironically—but if you are looking for a movie with any actually redeemable parts, you’re most certainly looking in the wrong place.

Final Rating: 1/5

New Year, New You

By Abigail Schwartzman / Art by Diane Nguyen

Ah yes, the New Year: the best time to transform ourselves and move forward as a new person. Yet, it seems as if there are some resolutions that are bound to fail if not properly executed. Here are the top three failed New Year’s resolutions, and what you can do to stick with them.

#3 Spend less, save more

Everyone is guilty of buying something they don’t need but desperately want, and that is completely fine—as long as it’s in moderation. I suggest not reducing all your available spending funds at once. You can’t go from buying consistently to spending nothing at all; we all deserve a treat here and there. Instead, set up a savings account where around ninety-five percent of your money can be set aside. You can then use the other five percent for your own wants while still saving plenty of money for necessary spending. Depending on how much money you make, you may need to tweak your budget a bit to make it work best for you.

Debit cards are another great way to curb spending because you have an actual limit, unlike with credit cards. I recommend putting part of that five percent onto the debit card, and using only that amount each week. In the end though, most of it should still go towards something that you think will benefit you in the future—not something you want in the moment.

It’s easier said than done, especially with the easy access to online shopping and all the tempting offers that it holds.



#2 Get Organized

I personally struggle with this one too. It just seems so tedious to organize everything, but it really is beneficial. When everything is in its place it’s so much easier to just grab your things and go, instead of wasting time trying to find something. To get organized, I recommend starting small—maybe start by cleaning out your backpack and binders so you can easily identify your papers. You can then move on to larger things, like your bedroom. The hardest part of staying organized is maintaining it, so try to keep it consistent. If you are motivated, you will be able to turn your organization into a habit in as little as three weeks. Just be sure to stick to it!



#1 Lose weight, exercise more

What a surprise... just kidding! This is by far the most frequently failed resolution. Before hitting the gym and becoming a saladarian, find out if you need to lose weight or just need to build some muscle. Some people are at a perfectly healthy weight and just need to create some muscle to feel more comfortable with themselves. To figure out if you need to shed a few pounds, you can google a standard BMI (Body Mass Index) chart which tells you if your weight is normal for your height and age. You can also consult a doctor if you want to know if you have been sticking to your growth chart. If that's the case, you may be fine right where you are.

If you decide that you want to lose weight, there are a couple dos and don'ts. Do change up the types of foods you take in. Everybody is different, so everybody needs different types and amounts of food to keep things interesting. Do *not* starve yourself. There is a minimum food intake level specific to each person; do not go below it. As soon as you enter the starving zone, your weight loss method is no longer healthy, so please don't harm yourself in the process. Do exercise to build some muscle. Don't get worried if your weight doesn't lower as fast as you'd like. Muscle weighs more than other parts of the body, so as it's being built, your weight may remain constant before going down. If you're very serious, you can also consult a dietician to get a program custom-made for you. Above all, remember that it's okay to eat foods that you enjoy—you don't have to suffer. Just eat in moderation, and you will be all set.

All three of these resolutions may sometimes seem impossible, but keep in mind that no one is perfect, and that it's okay to skip a day. Just pick up where you left off and keep pushing forward.



Loosely based off of the world-renowned opera *Le Boheme* by Puccini, *Rent* is a masterpiece following the lives of a group of struggling artists suffering from AIDS/HIV. This musical covers topics from love to loss, with the spotlight on characters such as Mark Cohen (Tom Morrell/Justin Robinson), Roger Davis (Jonas Campagna), and Mimi (Isa Antonetti). These “bohemians” suffer through disease in order to find what truly matters in the world: love.

Show dates: 7 PM on March 26, 27, and 28; 2PM on March 28

Directors:

Ms. Loucks, Ms. Mills, Ms. Rice

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By David Wang