



Northern Light



NMS Sets School Record at Spelling Bee

By Lila P. Halpert

On Thursday, January 11th, 2024, forty-two students participated in North Middle’s annual Scripps National School-wide Spelling Bee. This year was unique in many ways; for example, it was one of the longest bees in recent memory, lasting nearly three hundred words and more than four periods (plus the allotted assembly time). In fact, since the bee lasted so long, the microphones’ batteries ran out halfway through, which was another first in relation to this bee.

Immediately after homeroom, the victors of each December class spelling bee reported down to the boys’ gymnasium to begin the preliminary round. This was another part of the bee which was different from previous years: the ongoing construction in the auditorium prevented the bee from occurring in its usual location. While the assembly technically began around 9:40, the preliminary round started almost an hour earlier, around 8:45. It acted like a warm-up for the contestants, letting everyone ease into the spelling bee and how it would run. Per tradition, Mr. Norberto served as pronouncer, while Ms. Raffo, Ms. Rice, Ms. Feehan, Mr. Del Ferraro, and Ms. Wang judged the competition. Additionally, Ms. Andreacchi was in charge of ringing a small silver bell, which let spellers know when they had spelled a word incorrectly and were eliminated.

After the preliminary round, which took approximately two periods, ended, the official spelling bee began as the livestream started under the direction of Mr. Derych. Rounds flew by, getting more and more difficult each time. The audience filed in and out of the gym as classes swapped, the competition intensifying with each passing round.

The bee started out fairly straightforward, with vocabulary that had been on the school’s study list, like “craquelure,” “bureaucrats,” “Erlenmeyer flask,” “avens,” “pullets,” and “senescent.” However, as the number of spellers onstage dwindled and the contest continued on well past the end of the assembly, the familiar terminology entered uncharted territory with words that had not been available for studying. Suddenly, the spellers were faced with new jargon, such as “faddish,” “shoddiness,” “liturgy,” “indices,” and more.

Third period came and went as the contestants were slowly eliminated. By the start of fourth period, the number of spellers had dropped well into the single digits. The suspense was at an all-time high as the remaining contestants surpassed round twenty and five spellers became four became three became two. With only a few minutes to go before fifth period, sixth grader Victor Yang spelled “dogmatism” correctly, successfully triumphing over me (Lila Halpert) and winning the bee. Due to the new Scripps rules this year, both he and I will progress to the second round of the bee, the results of which will determine who moves on to the regional competition.

In conclusion, this was one of the most interesting and unique bees in a long time: the new rules, the different location, the valuable lessons that can be attained, and the head-to-head competition found in the final rounds all made the 2024 North Middle bee one to remember.



In this issue....

School News.....1-10

Comic Strip.....6

Technology....12

Entertainment...13-21

Creator’s Corner....22-23

Sports.....24-25



NMS Math Team Off to a Strong Start

By Charlie Yu

After coming off one of its most successful years in recent history, the Math Team at North Middle School is having another successful year. Led and advised by Dr. Boyt, members of the club can compete in up to 12 competitions during the course of the year. Some of the popular competitions include the AMC 8 and Mathcounts, but students can also participate in multiple others such as the AMC 10, Math Olympiads, the New York Math League, and the Purple Comet Math Meet. These competitions test students' knowledge in a variety of subjects in math such as algebra, geometry, number theory, combinations, etc. The Math Team meets most Tuesdays at 3pm in Room 111. All students at North Middle can learn many new tricks and improve in all aspects of math by joining the club.

8th grader Jake Wu who is a member of the club states, "The Math Team is always welcoming and helps deliver helpful math tips that have helped me many times during class. Every week, Dr. Boyt brings new problems that challenge me."

Last year, the Math Team won multiple awards in the Math League and five students advanced to the State Mathcounts Championship in Saratoga Springs. This year, the team is aiming to repeat its successes and continue to do well in competitions. This year, 24 students competed in the North Middle Mathcounts and the students with the highest scores have made it onto the North Middle Mathcounts Team where they will be competing in the Long Island Mathcounts Competition in the upcoming weeks. They hope to have the same success as last year in making it to the state competition. Additionally, the AMC 8 will be taking place this year on January 23 at 3pm. All students are encouraged to participate in this challenging, but enriching competition. Already, over 50 students have signed up. Students can sign up by joining the Google Classroom and signing up using the link Dr. Boyt has posted. The classroom code is "xd3g5va". In previous years, there have been close to 100 students participating in the AMC 8.

"It is encouraging to see so many people tackle really challenging math problems after school when there are so many other activities they could be doing. They really work their brains" states Dr. Boyt. This is Dr. Boyt's tenth year coaching the NMS Math Team. Before coming to Great Neck, he coached the Math Team at MS 67 in Queens for seven years.

Overall, the Math Team is a really fun club that all students can join. As a member myself, I can personally say that the club is rewarding and I get to meet, talk, and work with many bright and innovative classmates. Even if you aren't interested in math, I recommend that all students go to a meeting and check it out with a friend!

Northern Light Staff

Teacher Advisors

Mrs. Trina Rice
Ms. Ann Wang

Editors

Josiah Baires
Amelia Chang
Lila Halpert
Noah Hourizadeh
Paige Klein
Catherine Lei
Sophia McLaughlin
Aadi Saxena
Catherine Wang

Jacob Baires
Danai Bezerianou
Brooke Bullaro
Dylan Chen
Kylie Deng
Derek Gao
Xuhui Gao
Elizabeth Guan
Alex Hyman
Hannah Hyman
Eliana Nejat
Noah Nerayoff
Aadi Saxena
Haley Szeto
Richard Yi
Charlie Yu

Great Neck Public Schools Board of Education

Rebecca Sassouni, President
Grant Toch, Vice President
Joanne Chan, Trustee
Steve Chen, Trustee
Donna Peirez, Trustee

Central Administration

Kenneth R. Bossert, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

John O'Keefe

Assistant Superintendent for Business
Stephen C. Lando, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education

Diana Haanraads

Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education

Joseph G. Hickey, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services

Richard S. Sherman Great neck North Middle School

Dr. Gerald Cozine, Principal
Ms. Nancy Gunning, Assistant Principal
Mr. Brendan Nelson, Assistant Principal
Ms. Cinthia Raffo, English Chairperson

DNA Trip

By Richard Yi

Here's something that you probably never knew. Long Island has its own world famous laboratory, called the Cold Spring DNA Laboratory. Something interesting, huh? Well the seventh grade class of the 2023-2024 school year went there through November 27th-November 30th. You see, seventh grade is split up into three SWISs, and each SWIS went on their day. So here's what the seventh graders did on the trip.

First everybody got on a bus (there were two) and set off for Cold Spring Harbor. The bus ride took about 40 minutes and the students were behaving fine. It was pretty boring and we didn't have much to do. One student named Brian said, "Half an hour later and we are still on Northern Boulevard."

When the students got off the bus, they were ushered inside by some teachers and sorted into their groups. Then they went with their group leader to go to their station. There were three stations to go to and each group was assigned a random one. In my group (group 2, SWIS 3), we went to the DNA Extraction Station. When we got there, the instructor told us what DNA was and how the extracting process works. We were told that we were extracting DNA from wheat germs (they aren't actual germs by the way). We first got some wheat germ and we added water to it. Then we added soap and a little bit of ethanol. The DNA then floated to the top allowing us to begin the procedure of extraction. We used special DNA extraction "wands" or we used a syringe to suck up the DNA and put it in small tubes that were made into a necklace. In case you, the reader, was wondering, DNA in large clumps is white, looks like boogers, and is kind of slimy. Definitely would not recommend touching it (also probably don't eat it because then you might have some traits of wheat).

Next, we went off with our DNA necklaces (I keep mine in my room), and headed off to the Exploration About Our Planet and Humans section (I just made that up by the way). So first a lady talked to us for about an hour about what we were going to do. I thought I was older than Ötzi when she finished speaking about him. Finally, she finally let us go around and explore everything in the museum at the DNA Lab.

Finally that was over and then we went on to our final station, The Mystery of Anastasia. We went into a room with about 20 laptops and we each sat down at one. Then we went through the mystery together and tried to use clues to figure out the mystery. By the end, my belly was rumbling. We finally ate lunch and headed back to school. All in all the trip was a 4/10, mainly because of the Exploration Station. The DNA Extraction Station was kind of nice but as they always say, one rotten apple spoils the whole bunch. Hope you enjoyed the article and keep on reading this issue!



No Shave November

By Sophia McLaughlin

Every year, North Middle holds its very own No Shave November during the month of November. During No-Shave November, a group of male teachers compete to see who will grow the best beard. Outside of the nurse's office, pictures of the contestants were shown, and students could purchase tickets to vote on which teacher had the best beard. The tickets would be placed in envelopes.

No Shave November is used to raise money in order to raise cancer awareness.. At the end of November, a random student's ticket will be pulled out of the winning teacher's envelope and they will win an awesome prize!

This year's winner was ... Dr. Cozine! At the end of November, Dr. Cozine had mutton chops, which is a type of mustache that grows mainly on the sides of the face.

"I think No Shave November is a great way for NMS to support Relay Field Day and its efforts to "celebrate more birthdays." NMS students supported the "contest," and the money raised will help the American Cancer Society fund many of its valuable programs. Thanks to all of the students for supporting the cause and to those teachers who abandoned their razors for a whole month!"- Dr. Cozine

Gift of Life Fundraiser

By Eliana Nejat

Want to make a difference and help out the community? Donate to the Gift of Life! All you have to do is buy something! Buy things like lollipops, stickers, keychains, and more! Anything from entertainment to food.

The Gift of Life club is all about giving and helping others with a smaller amount of opportunities. They are currently fundraising for a campaign for a boy named Brian to get surgery! Brian is 12 years old, and he lives in Kitgum, Uganda. All the money raised this year will go to helping him and his family pay for a heart surgery that he needs.

New Teacher Interview with Ms. Hrysko

By Brooke Bullaro

Ms. Hrysko is a new teacher this year, teaching 8th grade earth science. Here are some things about her for you to get to know her better!

Interviewer: What college did you attend?

Ms. Hrysko: I attended SUNY Oneonta college.

Interviewer: If you worked at another school before this what school?

Ms. Hrysko: I worked at Three Village Schools.

Interviewer: What are some things you like about GNNMS?

Ms. Hrysko: I like the school atmosphere.

Interviewer: What are some hobbies you enjoy?

Ms. Hrysko: I like crocheting as my hobby.

Interviewer: What subject do you teach?

Ms. Hrysko: I teach earth science.

Interviewer: What is your favorite animal?

Ms. Hrysko: My favorite animal is a jellyfish.

Interviewer: If you could have one superpower what would it be?

Ms. Hrysko: It would be to teleport.

Interviewer: If you could go anywhere in the world where would you go?

Ms. Hrysko: I would go to Greece.

Interviewer: Which season do you like the most?

Ms. Hrysko: I like the fall season the most.

Interviewer: Where is your favorite place to travel to?

Ms. Hrysko: My favorite place to travel is the beach.

Art 9: “Secrets” Revealed!

By Catherine Wang

Art 9 is a course that students have the chance to join as an elective in 8th grade. For reference, Ms. Kirleis, the teacher of this class, has shared some of the objectives in Art 9. So, if you have ever wondered about the fog of mystery surrounding this course, this interview should provide you with some clarity:

First off, if you really don’t know what Art 9 is or if you are interested in joining, Ms. Kirleis has given a brief introduction to the course:

“Art 9 is a course for students who demonstrate artistic ability, interest, and the maturity to engage in a high school level course while in 8th grade. Some of our goals include: for students to experiment with a variety of materials and techniques, to learn about famous artists, to take inspiration from not only famous artwork but the world around them, and to engage in creative problem solving.”

What are some of the objectives in Art 9? What types of assignments/projects are there?

“When I’m thinking about a new unit or project, I think about the skills I want my students to learn and the experiences I want them to have. Sometimes I take inspiration from the work of famous artists. I also think about what subject matter and what materials work best for what I’m trying to teach and the skills that I want my students to improve upon. These skills include the creation of interesting and balanced compositions, drawings realistically, drawing/shading to create the illusion of space and depth, and using art to express emotions and ideas. I also think that it is important for students to have open-ended assignments that promote creativity. At times, they have the opportunity to select their subject matter which makes the project more interesting and individual. Overall, I want students to improve upon their technical skills while developing their artistic voices and ability to express their ideas visually.

In Art 9, you can be sure to experience a variety of various mediums and even experiment with them. This is particularly apparent when drawing certain forms or learning new techniques with each upcoming project.

What projects do we create? Art Show?

“North Middle has an annual spring art show where we feature work from various grades and courses, in addition to highlighting the work of our Art 9 students. From year to year, although students don’t necessarily create the same projects, the same concepts are covered using different materials or entirely different projects in general. Thus, the projects you see displayed in the art show from year to year may not be the same.”

Speaking of the Art Show, Art 9 students also get a section dedicated to the work that they have completed in this year long course. You will have created a gallery’s worth of art along with your classmates and this will encompass much of what is being viewed by the school at the Art Show.

Do Art 9 students really design the yearbook cover, the musical t-shirt...?

“Some of the creative digital projects that we work on in Art 9 include the 8th grade T Shirt design, the yearbook cover, and the musical logo design. Art 9 students have been working on these projects for a number of years and they give students the opportunity to have their work featured. This is wonderful for both North Middle and our Art 9 students.”

If you have ever wondered why a certain familiar or unfamiliar name is being credited in the yearbook, that is the name of a student at NMS and they are being credited because they designed the front and back covers of the yearbook you are now holding and flipping through. You may even be looking at the artwork of Art 9 students on fliers and posters in the school hallways throughout the day...

School News

On a final note, what is special about Art 9? Where does the biggest difference between Art 9 and Art 6, 7, and 8 lie?

“In Art 9, students create high level work and are given projects geared towards high school art students. In the class they are surrounded by like minded and talented students who excel in and take art seriously. It is a unique environment, where students take inspiration from their peers and are motivated and inspired by what their classmates create. Students are especially supportive and encouraging of one another. Some students even come to the art room during lunch to hang out and create more artwork or to catch up on assignments.”

Who knows where you will take inspiration from or what may wow you in this environment of work, study, and art.

Hopefully, the rumors you have heard about Art 9 with...students bringing their lunches up to a certain corner of the building, new, perhaps vastly differing, artwork for the yearbook each year, large clipboards circulating around the building...are now all explained, clarified, and have put your curious mind at rest.

Comic Strip by Haley Szeto



School News

Musical Insider Special

There's No Place Like Home

By Amelia Chang

This school year, the production has been announced— it's *The Wizard of Oz*, a movie released in 1939 starring Judy Garland in the role of Dorothy. This musical is a classic, produced numerous times by various individuals before and after the movie was released in 1939. This is a production that children have grown up watching, and still grow up watching, dreaming of a heaven-like place that exists over the rainbow: a lovely, colorful place where worries melt like lemon drops, where birds fly, and where life is as serene and joyous as one could ever fantasize. To many, this musical is a symbol of childhood, and they would watch this onscreen performance over and over again for the pure sake of experiencing the nostalgia and glory of being a bright youth without a care or burden in the world— if only to feel like an innocent child, whose daydreams have not been simply delusions, once again.

Producers' and directors' interpretations of this musical will likely differ, but for Great Neck North Middle School's director, she is aiming for that dreamy, wistful recreation of one's youth.

Here are interviews with Ms. Murdocco, the director, and Ms. Larson, the producer.

“So, *The Wizard of Oz* has been my favorite movie since I was a kid. I used to have my whole room decorated in *The Wizard of Oz* paraphernalia, or stuff. I loved this story— when I was growing up, I played Dorothy, once. It was actually the very first production I was involved with here, at North Middle School, back in 2012. I was not the director then, I was just the music director. This time, I want to bring it back and put my own spin on it.

“Dorothy in the show realizes in the end that she should not have to look too far for things that she loves— that it's really all where she already is— that's why they say there's no place like home. So, I want people to walk away appreciating the people and experiences that they have in their life and not wishing for something greater all the time.

“As far as the ‘how,’ that is what I'll explore with the actors and actresses. I will always come in with ideas of what I want to do— but as far as the actual performance, the actors will do what they do.

“We spend time on understanding how to connect our own life experiences to the message of the show during part of our early discussions, especially with the lead characters. A lot of times, students misunderstand that they have to ‘become’ the character, but I try to teach that the character comes from within— from inside of who you are. So, the second you're able to put your own stamp on what your interpretation is, that connection with the message comes.” — Ms. Murdocco (North Middle School Chorus and Musical Director)

“This production means a few things to me. Number one, I like seeing the connections that students make with each other, whether in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. And, how they start out as just kids in a cast and a crew, but end up tight-knit— a family. They love each other— that means everything to me. The other thing that I love is the involvement of families and the community in the show. Whether they are helping out with different parts— local businesses, or donating ads, etc.

“Every year we focus on some kind of a theme with the show, and really the theme for this show is that there's no place like home, that family matters, that friends matter, and that you have to rely on one another. You need a sense of community to be successful and happy, and I think that we can learn from that as a school and as a community— I think that's very important.

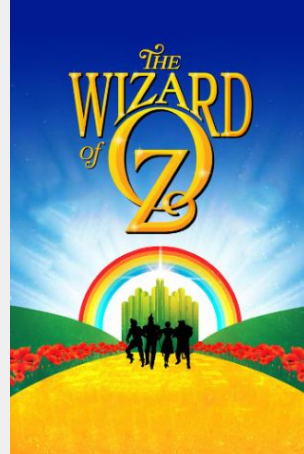
“How the performance should be performed is really up to Ms. Murdocco, because she is the director and the eyes and the ears of how it should look, but I do know she wants to go with the very classic telling of it, and not really modernizing it, but really sticking to the traditional way of performing the musical and telling that story which is over one hundred years old, so it's pretty cool that we can still bring that to the stage a hundred years later.

“I think the middle schoolers always seem to manage in delivering the theme of the production, and I think that the kids involved in the cast and the crew are very unique and that they're tuned in to beyond the social pressures of what we have in middle school. Middle school is hard for kids, but they can look past that and they can see beyond— that this is something that will bond them for life— the friendships that these kids are going to make are going to bond them for life as friends, and doing it through this story and telling this story— I think they will appreciate it that much more.” — Ms. Larson (North Middle School Theater Company Producer)

Musical Insider Special

The Wizard of Oz Teaser

By Noah Nerayoff



The Wizard of Oz is an American fantasy film released in August, 1939. *The Wizard of Oz* is based on L. Frank Baum's children's fantasy novel written in 1900— *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. *The Wizard of Oz* was originally directed by Victor Fleming, who left the production midway to direct *Gone with the Wind*.

The film begins with Dorothy, the main character. She has a dog, whose name is Toto. Miss Gulch, the antagonist from Dorothy's life in Kansas, attempts to take Toto away. However, Toto escapes, and Dorothy and Toto run away from home. They then meet a magician who convinces them to go back home, where the magician reminds Dorothy of just how much her aunt has provided for her and loved her. When they get home, a tornado starts to sweep into the town where Dorothy lives, and as it gets closer to her family's barn, the tornado knocks her out, sending her into the land of Oz.

There, she meets Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, who wants her to succeed in her journey to get back home, but also to make sure she understands and appreciates what her home really means to her. Because Dorothy's house had landed on the Wicked Witch of the East, she is now left with a pair of magical ruby slippers and with the Wicked Witch of the West, who deeply desires to own the ruby slippers herself. The ruby slippers are put on Dorothy's feet by Glinda, and she begins her journey down the famous yellow brick road. There she meets the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Lion, each who needs something from the Wizard. The Scarecrow needs a brain. The Tinman needs a heart, and for the Lion— he needs courage.

They head to Emerald City, where the Wizard resides. They need to find him and ask him for the things they all need, but the Wicked Witch curses Dorothy, and attacks them. The Good Witch saves them, and they manage to continue. They eventually find the well known Wizard, and are eager to make their requests. The Wizard, in all his mighty glory, refuses to aid them, unless they can get the Wicked Witch of the West's broomstick.

The Wicked Witch takes Dorothy, so the Scarecrow, Tinman, and Lion are left to save her themselves. They conjure up a plan and successfully save Dorothy and Toto, despite being afraid, and seemingly not courageous at all before.

They return to the Wizard with the broomstick, and he is unhappy at their return, as he tried to send them away with an "impossible" task. He is revealed to not be the Wizard he claims to be, and rather, he is a normal man, from Kansas. He does not give them what they asked for, rather, he helps the Scarecrow, the Tinman, and the Lion gain a new perspective. Although these friends of Dorothy do not physically have a heart, a brain, and courage, they do hold these things deep inside of them. The Scarecrow could always think wisely, the Tinman can still love deeply, and the Lion can overcome his fears— which is, after all, what courage really is. After helping Dorothy's dear friends gain such wisdom, the Wizard attempts to bring Dorothy home. Glinda helps Dorothy return to her home in Kansas, and she is transported back to her bed, where she had originally left for Oz.

She tells her family about her adventure, and how each person she met in her story resembles and represents each one of them. They may not believe her, but Dorothy is sincerely happy to be home, because there is, after all, no place like home.

Musical Insider Special

Behind the Scenes of the Musical

By Alex Hyman & Noah Nerayoff

On September 25th, Mrs. Larson began her yearly guessing game of what the musical would be. The five options on the board were these: *The Little Mermaid*, *Cinderella*, *Matilda*, *The Wizard Of Oz*, and *SpongeBob*. Every day, Mrs. Larson would remove an option. *SpongeBob* was gone, then *Cinderella*, then *Matilda*, and finally *The Little Mermaid*. The musical was released as *The Wizard Of Oz* just in time for the club fair. Although many kids were upset by this choice, they were overall excited, and planned to make the best of the musical.

On November 15th, there was an informational meeting held for the musical. In the informational meeting, students were divided into two groups. The groups were those wanting to be in the musical and those wanting to be in the stage crew. As Ms. Andreacchi took those wanting to be in the stage crew out of the classroom, Mrs. Murdocco and Mrs. Larson kept the remaining students in the room. They explained how the musical would go, how rehearsals would be, and most importantly, what the workload was. Many left after hearing the workload, or decided they couldn't handle it and quit. She also gave us, those interested in auditioning for the musical, audition sheets and explained the process. We then made audition groups of five. Those people would be with you when you auditioned, and would be the order in which you were to audition.

After the meeting, I spoke to many people there, new and old, and heard what they had to say about the dedication necessary to be a part of the musical. Daniella Kaplan, who has been in the school musicals before, said, "My reaction was that it looked like a lot of work and a lot to memorize lines for, but I was excited to be a part of the musical." Julia Reed said, "The musical is a very fun experience, and even if you have a lot of rehearsals, Mrs. Murdocco makes sure you have time to do homework and anything else you need to do."

On December 4th the first auditions were held, and the second day of auditions were held on December 6th. For auditions, students learned either a song or monologue to perform. A monologue is a paragraph spoken by one character, uninterrupted. Auditions began after school in room 209, and started with some opening statements about how the musical would go, and after that there was some time for vocal warm ups and final touch ups to your song or monologue. After that, Mrs. Coutieri, who is the musical's choreographer, came. She began with teaching everyone a dance, piece by piece, and everyone had to perform it. She then had us perform the dance in our audition groups, so she could see better how each person did. After everyone had danced, everyone was taken into another room and then taken back in their audition groups to perform their monologues and songs.

Afterwards, students went home and waited for Thursday, December 7th for callbacks. Callbacks are a final chance for Mrs. Murdocco to cast those she has a problem placing into a role. Not all students get a callback, and those that do are not guaranteed a role. On the other hand, students might not get a callback but still get a significant role. It can simply mean they know your role already. The callback list (the list of students getting a callback) was posted Wednesday night. Thursday after school, callbacks began. Students were asked to speak and act for specific characters, and the cast list would be posted the next day. There was much anxiety within the cast on Friday, with people attempting to predict the cast list. There was also something called "double casting," which is when every character is cast twice and there are two casts that do the show. Almost every 8th grader didn't want double casting, as most were in *Descendants* (which was double casted) and did not enjoy it. On the other hand, it increases chances for everyone to get a good role, so many others *did* want double casting.

On Friday, the cast list came out and many people rushed to room 118 to see the results. Many people were devastated, and others were overjoyed. Mrs. Murdocco ended up double casting, as there is a very large cast. The cast list was shortly thereafter posted to Google Classroom, and people found out their roles. The following Thursday, there was a cast and crew movie watching, where people came together in Mrs. Murdocco's room to watch *The Wizard Of Oz*. The musical will take place on March 20th and 21st.

Great Neck North Middle Musical School Stage Crew

By Amelia Chang

As of October 2023, it is official that North Middle School’s production this school year through 2024 will be *The Wizard of Oz*! While the cast is a vital part of bringing many previous and future performances to an astonishing level— behind the scenes, the crew also plays a crucial role in providing for the show and making sure everyone walks out of the production dazzled by the backdrops, flow, and the sensational performances of the talented young actors and actresses.

The job of stage crew is to provide a life-like visual and audial experience for the audience— which means things like lighting, sound, painting and cueing the backdrops, moving props onto and off of the stage, etc.

Because of the excessive work that has to be put into a production to make it successful and the best it can be, cheers to the Stage Manager, Ms. Andreacchi, who is in charge of organizing all of the stage crew— which takes a lot of patience and dedication for so much work! Many thanks to Ms. Brendel as well, who is in charge of the lighting— a crucial part of focusing the audience’s attention on the stage, and creating a remarkable effect.

Just how hard is it to organize a whole production backstage, without even being seen by the audience, and what does it take to successfully light, assemble, and ready the stage for a phenomenal, never-seen-before performance?

AC: What do you think it takes for a production to be successful and the best that it can be?

VA: Well, as the Stage Manager, I’m a little bit biased, but I think that a good crew that’s on top of things and knows when everything needs to be moved and where they need to be moved makes things flow very smoothly.

AC: What do you think makes an individual performance unique and out of this world— different from all the other performances?

VA: The director puts their own spin on the show— I think Ms. Murdocco does a really good job of making everything her own— and directing the show well so that it is unique.

AC: Do you often get frustrated when things are not going how you interpreted and intended them to?

VA: No, I try to be as easy-going as I can. I understand that it’s a middle school show and while things go very well— you guys are very good and the show always ends up really good— you’re also ten, eleven, twelve, and thirteen years old, so mistakes are going to happen.

AC: How do you think the production would turn out if you (and your team) weren’t there?

VA: There would be no production. There’s no show without a set, backdrops, lighting, sound, and props. It’s just people on stage walking around. (Ms. Murdocco will agree with me!)

Overall, both the Stage Manager and her team are required to make the musical truly an experience for the senses, and a sensation that captivates the audience in many more ways than sheerly how the actors and actresses could.

Advice from Miss Know-It-All

Dear Miss Know-It-All,

A girl two years younger has been following me around everywhere. She always sits across from me on the bus. Yesterday, I noticed she follows me on all of my social media accounts and likes and comments on all of my videos. Last week, I was playing basketball with my friends in my driveway. She rode her bike back and forth and I could feel her staring at us. It seems like she is watching me wherever I go. Please help me find a way to get rid of her.

Thank you so much,
Logan Z

Dear Logan,

A lot of what you wrote are assumptions. Maybe she likes you, or maybe she just wants to be your friend. Have you tried approaching her and saying, “Hello?” The first step is figuring out what she wants. If she wants to be your friend and you don’t want to, maybe you’re missing out on a kind person. If she likes you and you don’t feel the same way, just be honest with her. Tell her she seems nice, but you are just not interested in her in that way. It appears you don’t even know her. However, if you disagree with me and want nothing to do with her, simply tell her you are really busy with school and sports. Try to be nice and please don’t jump to conclusions.

Let me know how this turns out,
Miss Know-It-All



Dear Miss Know-It-All,

This year has been a tough one. I’ve failed my last four science and math tests. My friends in these classes all have A’s while I have C’s. Even though I started studying a week before, it’s been no use. My parents even got me a tutor, but nothing seems to work. Can you tell me some other strategies to get my grade from a C to an A by the end of the quarter?

Sincerely,
Gemma T

Dear Gemma,

Have you tried speaking to your teachers? Always go to extra help a few days before the test, if not earlier. After the test, go to extra help again to review questions you have gotten wrong. The teacher will help you understand the material that may be difficult. Another strategy is to get help from your friends. Ask them how they study for tests. Also, if your tutors aren’t helping, maybe consider getting a different tutor. (I’ve been told I’m pretty nifty at Science and Math ;-). My other recommendations are to pay attention in class, submit all of your homework on time, and do any extra credit assignments.

Hope this advice helps!
Miss Know-It-All





LARQ Water Bottle

By Noah Hourizadeh

The LARQ bottle was made to help people with unclean and unsafe drinking water stay hydrated with clean water. Justin Wang created the LARQ water bottles and probably saved thousands of lives. Justin Wang is a man of many products and also made Foreo Face Brushes. The LARQ Water Bottle removes 99.99% of bacteria from the filthy water people drink from unfiltered sources by the click of a button.

Some weaknesses for the LARQ water bottle are that it doesn't filter out chlorine and that they are a bunch of fake copies that are cheaper out there. However, the strengths of this water bottle are so amazing because of the capabilities of this amazing invention. The unclean water from hotel sinks, rivers, and other places can be turned into the most fresh water ever by the click of a button.

The LARQ water bottles are sold in different models from the wide range of \$85.99 - \$129.99 which can scare customers. It costs them \$40 to make and manufacture the LARQ water bottle. The LARQ water bottle was created for hikers and travelers. However, Justin Wang said that all people can buy it and use it as a filter to a unfiltered sink for fresh and clean water.

The LARQ water bottle is set to be successful and already is because every year their sales go up. For example, last year they made 14 million dollars in sales which is a crazy amount, but this year they have already made 20 million.



App Review: *Kinder World*

By Lila P Halpert

Every so often, one comes across an app that's simply *perfect*. It could be due to any number of factors: the app's mood, its content, or anything else. However, only a select few are perfect for every person, no matter where they are in life or what their app preferences are. *Kinder World*, I'm happy to report, is one of those rare hidden gems. Its simple and accessible premise — improving well-being through virtual gardening — is easy and straightforward, and is practically guaranteed to put a smile on any user's face.

Within minutes of opening the app for the first time, *Kinder World's* mechanics and goals are explained to the user: water digital houseplants twice a day through exercises designed to help with emotional and mental well-being. Some examples of the services provided by the app include participating in minute-long guided meditation or filling a terrarium with colorful sand representing emotions. The more plants you grow, the more species you'll unlock, as well as learning about the plant's personal story. You also meet the animal inhabitants of this richly animated world, such as an excited dog named Samy who relishes the simple things in life like naps and dog treats, an introverted hedgehog named Quilliam, and others. As you progress on your botanical path, you'll unlock more and more amenities like a friendship garden, a post office where you can send uplifting messages to other users, and customizable rooms which you can design to your liking. Of course, this is all secondary to the main goal — improving your mental and emotional health.

The program really does live up to its name: Between the supportive messages that can be sent and received, the adorable houseplants and neighbors, the positive impact that comes with it, and more, this app truly helps create a kinder world.



Entertainment Pages

Reviews, Fashion, Trends & MORE

Winter Holiday Poll

By Sophia McLaughlin

The holidays are here, homes are being decorated, and holiday songs are being played on the radio. So, I took the opportunity to survey multiple North Middle students to see how they celebrate their holidays.

There wasn't too much variation in what holidays people celebrated, with a close tie between Christmas and Hanukkah, with 50% for Hanukkah and a surprising 52% for Christmas. Some people celebrated more than one holiday, so that's why the percentages might be more than 100%. There were a few people who celebrated Kwanzaa, along with a percentage of people who celebrated the Lunar New Year. More than 85% of people spend their holidays with family, while some spend it with both their friends and family. A few people go away for the holidays, but most stay at home. For the people that do go away, a majority travel to different states in America, 38%, while others might travel to different places within New York State. I expected that many people would travel outside of the country for the holidays, but to my surprise, only 17% of people travel internationally.

As one could expect, everyone was excited for the holidays, but some more than others. I had the respondents rate their holiday excitement on a scale from 1-10, 1 being they were not excited, and 10 being they were extremely excited. 60% gave a ten, while others gave numbers between 7-9. Favorite holiday foods and holiday songs had the most variation, along with favorite holiday memories. There was a majority of people who said latkes were their favorite holiday food, while others liked more sweet food and put cookies and deserts. As for the songs category, there was a large agreement that "All I Want For Christmas is You" by Mariah Carey was the best holiday song, although not everyone knew the correct name of the song. There were other Hanukkah songs, like "Dreidel" and a few others.

So, however you spend your holidays, with family or with friends, just remember that everyone celebrates different holidays and in different ways.

Holiday Gift Trends

By Jett Gao

People want to get useful and suitable things for the holidays! Are you like that? Maybe a person bought an expensive present for you, but after that, you put it in the storage room. You never touched it, didn't even see it. After a long time, maybe it will be put in the trash bag on a cleaning day. Don't give more pointless gifts to your friends! Good gifts are good things for your friend. If you want your friend to like your gift, try some useful and suitable gifts!

1. Blind boxes

Blind boxes are very fashionable now. It is a set of dolls, figurines, or toys in the same theme. Buying the blind box is very interesting. When you are at the store, you can see the same set in many different boxes, but each one is different, and you can't see what is inside. You don't know what you're actually buying, because the toy is random. The doll, figure, or toy is small and cute. It might come with some props, like a little umbrella, clothes, or other small props. You can put it on your desk or you can have a centralized collection in a special shelf. They have collectability and playability, and are very good to be a present.

2. LEGO

LEGO's blocks are very famous around the world. It has a very long history, in the beginning it was just for kids, but they have some changes too. All adults can play with LEGOs too. Now, LEGO has many kinds of toys to buy as a present. It can be an ornament on the table, or a pendant on your bag. All people can find a suitable LEGO for them. LEGO has some movie or book themes in the blocks. Which book or movie do you like? As a present, they have Harry Potter and Star Wars and more themes. LEGO can give you very great playtime and suitable things for you.

3. "New form" electrical appliances

The most used thing in your life is what? You use a toothbrush each morning, if you have long hair, you use a hair dryer after you wash your hair, if you live alone in a big house, you may need a cleaning machine to help you to finish your cleaning. Because the technology is constantly growing, the shape of them is becoming more modern, and they can give you a sense of technology too. They have a diverse color and texture, and you can choose the most suitable for you. You can buy some electrical appliances in Dyson, Mijia, or online.

Reputation (Taylor's Version)

By Danai Bezerianou

As some may know, there has been some talk about *Reputation (Taylor's Version)*. Hints have been dropped by Taylor Swift herself, and Swifties are desperate to figure out what they mean.

A little backstory on *Reputation*.

Reputation was released on November 10th, 2017. This was after Taylor had reached what many thought to be the peak of her career, after her wildly popular album *1989* and the many awards she won from it. But her public reputation unexpectedly crumbled when Kanye West released an edited phone call with her talking with Kim Kardashian. Most people sided with the reality star over the singer, and started the hashtag #KimExposedTaylorParty. Everyone flooded Taylor's comment sections with snake emojis, as she was labeled one by West and most of the internet. Taylor has said this was a time in her life where things were very hard for her mentally.

Then *Reputation* came along: her "comeback" album, as I like to call it. Its electronic sound was entirely different from anything she had tried before, with songs destroying and rebuilding the persona she had built up before: Taylor sings about revenge on "I Did Something Bad," asks people if they are ready for this explosive album on the opener "...Ready For It?," declares her old self dead on "Look What You Made Me Do," and more. Most of its songs are calling out Kardashian and West, Swifties figured out.

I interviewed a couple students on their opinion on when they think Taylor will announce the re-record of this phenomenal and one-of-a-kind album.

Sophia McLaughlin says, "It didn't come out on the anniversary like I thought it would, and she's on tour right now, so she probably won't release it until later on. . . ."

Lila Halpert thought Taylor would announce it on New Year's Day due to the title of the *Reputation*'s final song, "New Year's Day." Many others, like Amelia Chang and Molly Forst, thought the same. However, this did not pan out, just like many of the other announcement theories.

I think Taylor is always leaving hints for her fans. For example, a few years ago in an interview with Ellen DeGeneres, she explained, "There will be no explanation, there will just be *Reputation*," which led to some fans questioning whether she will even announce the release or just go in and release it with no context whatsoever.

Other hints include changing the blazer she wears during her Eras Tour song "The Man" from light blue to black, with golden boots. Black is traditionally viewed as the color of *Reputation*, and this occurred while the *Reputation (TV)* announcement rumors were going around, so everyone was even more convinced.

Adding on, all her Eras Tour backup dancers posted on Instagram, their captions accompanied by a black heart. The veteran Swifties noticed the Reputation phone case was 66% off on her website, and she was at her sixty-sixth show when she wore the black blazer.

Yet another far-fetched clue: In another Eras Tour show, where Swifties believed *Rep (TV)* was finally to be announced, Andrea Swift (Taylor's mother) showed up wearing all black. Nothing was announced that night, however. Some Swifties even went as far as to examine Taylor's nails, which were painted black.

And finally, the Empire State Building posted on something on Instagram that all Swifites are absolutely spiraling over. The post reads "There will be no explanation 🖤." I don't know about you, but I think that definitely means something.

So far, Taylor Swift herself has stayed quiet. Is *Reputation* actually going to be announced, or is she simply playing with us? Either way . . . are you ready for it? 🖤🐍

Entertainment Pages

Reviews, Fashion, Trends & MORE (cont'd)

Popular Video Games 2023-2024

By Jacob Baires

No. 1

Fortnite

Right now *Fortnite* is a very popular video game. Since the OG season came out, more users joined *Fortnite*. And now that the live event just happened, *Fortnite* is on a streak with streaming Even Tfue, an American streamer, came back. In addition, *Fortnite* partnered up with Lego and *Rocket League* and Eminem. New weapons and new parts of the island to explore have been put into the game. The Battle Pass, which includes rewards and other items, is very good, and it has very cool characters such as Peter Griffin from *Family Guy*. Finally, the Lamborghini was added into the game as well as the car from *Rocket League*.



No. 2

NBA 2K24

NBA 2K24 was released on September 8, 2023. There are two different versions of *NBA 2K24*. There's the Black MAMBA edition and the original version, 2K24. Both of these games are so worth playing because the game is smoother and shooting is easier from different angles. I definitely recommend playing this on console, but never on PC/Steam.



No.3

Super Smash Bros. Ultimate

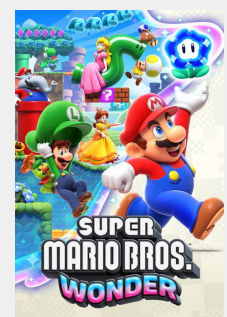
Super Smash Bros. Ultimate is a 2018 crossover fighting game developed by Bandai Namco studios and Sora Ltd. and published by Nintendo for the Nintendo Switch. It is the fifth installment in the Super Smash Bros. series. The strongest character in *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* is Kirby because he can basically do anything, and the second strongest is probably Ness or King Dedede.



No.4

Super Mario Bros. Wonder

Super Mario Bros. Wonder was published on October 20, 2023. Ninety-four percent of people like this game. It is available on Nintendo Switch. It's a single and multiplayer video game. One detail about the game is Mario and his friends' journey to the Flower Kingdom.



Entertainment Pages

Reviews, Fashion, Trends & MORE (cont'd)

No.5

The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom

The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom was released on May 12, 2023. Ninety-five percent of people like this game so it's a good game to play. It's a single player game. Since it came out for the first three days of its release it sold over 10 million copies and by September 19.5 million copies. However, new players shouldn't start with *Tears of the Kingdom*. Because it's a series and story, new players should start from the beginning.



No.6

MLB: The Show 23

MLB: The Show 23 was released on March 24, 2023. It is available on most consoles you may or may not have. It's a multiplayer game, and you can play with other users. The game is based on baseball, and you can choose teams and verse another team.



No.7

Star Wars: JEDI Fallen Order

Star Wars: JEDI Fallen Order was released in 2019. It's a fighting game, and it is also an action-adventure game and a puzzle genre. This story was set in the Star Wars universe. It was published 5 years after the movie *Star Wars: Episode III– Revenge of the Sith*. It is a single player game. The game has several characters based on the previous movies. And the movement is important such as the powers like the force.



No.8

FIFA Mobile

FIFA Mobile was developed by EA sports and EA Vancouver and released on October 11, 2016. It's a single player video game and multiplayer game. I think everyone gets hyped when the World Cup is on. Kylian Mbappe has been shown on almost every cover of *FIFA* since he became popular. The game is about playing on teams versus your friends or other users. The main goal is to have good players on your team. To purchase good players you need to have a lot of tokens.



No.9

Rocket League

Rocket League is a multiplayer game. Some modes they have are tournaments 1v1, 2v2, 3v3, or 4v4. The main goal in *Rocket League* is to hit the ball with your car into your opponent's goal and win the game. Some major abilities are jumping in the air and hitting the ball, using your boost to glide in mid-air and ram the ball to score, and using a defense boost to ram into other players to explode their car. There is also an item shop. One car I listed above is Lightning McQueen.



I definitely recommend playing these games because they are so fun to play. I also recommend watching content creators guide through the game. You might need to purchase these games, but I'd say they're worth it.

EXCITING NEWS

TRAILER for GTA VI OUT and HINTS about the MAP!!

Entertainment Pages

Reviews, Fashion, Trends & MORE (cont'd)

Winter Weddings

By Amelia Chang

While winter weddings may be a lot less common and slightly harder to plan than the usual spring, autumn, and summer weddings, if done and planned correctly, it truly could be a real life winter wonderland.

A large portion of achieving the pretty winter feel for the big day is to embrace the holiday spirit— which means garlands, warm accents, plenty of candles, and more. Hosting a wedding on a winter day will mean it would likely be cold, many people will be traveling for the holidays, the weather may go awry, and things may be more expensive (things don't get cheaper for weddings just because winter weddings are uncommon!).

A great way to greet the guests in and out is to offer them warm drinks such as hot chocolate or tea, and hand warmers could also be a great way to keep guests comfortable and warm.

While winter is a beautiful and lovely season, many accidents could happen if precautions and Plan B's are not properly put into use.

One planning a wedding this time of year should always be aware that accidents can happen (and are more likely if there is snow, slippery roads, and freezing temperatures) and have emergency phone numbers should snow covered paths require to be cleared, and make sure that heaters are actively working on the day of the wedding.

One should also always send out save-the-dates and invitations in advance lest relatives and friends make plans for the holidays before knowing about the wedding. Planning ahead of time and making sure everyone invited is aware that the wedding is near the holidays is vital.

Winter is arguably one of the most gorgeous seasons of the year— however, awfully cold and prone to many accidents. If precautions and planning are made sure to be taken and well-organized, a winter wonderland wedding will be as enchanting as the exquisite sugar-powdered time of the year itself.

Taiwanese Street Food

By Sophia McLaughlin

In many Asian cultures, night markets and street food are a large part of everyday meals. Street food is an especially large part of Taiwanese Culture, so I asked a Taiwanese Chef, also known as my grandpa, to make some popular Taiwanese street food.

1. 锅贴(Guo Tie)

锅贴, also known as fried dumplings, are a popular dish not only in Taiwan, but around the world. They are by far one of the most popular Taiwanese dishes, second only to bubble tea(c). 锅贴 are crispy on the bottom and soft and flavorful on the inside. They are made using a non-stick pan, some water, olive oil, and dumplings with whatever fillings you want. There is a rich taste of the meat and if it is cooked well, the bottom has just the right amount of crispness that it is crunchy but not burnt.

2. 蚵仔煎(oh a jia) written as *ke zai jian*

蚵仔煎 are known as oyster pancakes, and are written and spoken in two different ways. It is written as ke zai jian, but in Taiwan, most people call it oh a jian. But in China, it is just called ke zai jian. This is because there are different dialects in Taiwan and China. Oh a jian is made with oysters, eggs, corn starch, eggs, and sweet chili sauce. There are some parts that are gooey and light, and some parts are more chewy and meaty. Depending on how much spicy sauce you put on it, the strength of the spice will vary. The sweet part of the sauce contrasts nicely with the chili and in small amounts, should barely be spicy at all!



Book Review: *Percy Jackson and the Chalice of the Gods*

By Lila P Halpert



Almost fifteen years after the original *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series ended, and coming after the finales of the many sister series (including but not limited to *The Heroes of Olympus*, *The Trials of Apollo*, and *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard*), a new *Percy Jackson* book has finally arrived. *Percy Jackson and the Chalice of the Gods*, which is of course authored by Rick Riordan, is packed with nostalgia for fans of the original series, such as a return to a first person perspective and, reminiscent of the first book, *The Lightning Thief*, the main adventuring party is made up of the original three characters — Percy Jackson, Annabeth Chase, and Grover Underwood.

The Chalice of the Gods also has a solid storyline: Percy decides to apply for New Rome University (a college exclusively for demigods first introduced in *The Heroes of Olympus*) along with his girlfriend Annabeth. He finds he needs three letters of recommendation from different gods in order to get into the exclusive school, which, if not received, could jeopardize his perfectly planned college experience. His first applicant is Ganymede, the cupbearer of the gods, whose official chalice has been stolen by another deity. It's up to Percy, Annabeth, and Grover to search all of Manhattan in order to solve the mystery, find the thief, and recover the chalice, all in the few weeks before Zeus, the ruler of Olympus, holds his next feast.

Just like in all of his previous *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles*, as the group of series is called, author Riordan expertly blends fast-paced action and exciting quests with an immense amount of heart. Whether Percy is discussing his love for Annabeth, his long-lived friendship with Grover, or his unusual relationship with his father Poseidon (who also happens to be the Greek god of the sea), the emotional beats of the story are what really elevate it from “unnecessary and boring sequel” to “unnecessary but enjoyable-all-the-same sequel.”

In conclusion, while *The Chalice of the Gods* is not entirely needed, it is still a great book with a well-done plot, satisfying conclusion, and a perfect mix of action and heart, as well as a wondrous return to the world of Percy Jackson.

12 Fun Facts about Winter

By Dylan Chen

1. The famous Times Square ball has been dropped more than 110 times over the years.
2. The tallest snowman built is over twelve stories tall.
3. The lowest recorded temperature is -89.2°C, or -128.6°F.
- π. Speaking of low temperatures, the lowest temperature possible is known as absolute zero, which is equal to -273.15°C or about -459°F.
4. Snow has fallen in Florida; on January 19th, 1977, an abnormal snowstorm hit, reaching as far south as Miami, Florida.
5. Snowflakes fall at a rate of 1 to 6 feet per second.
6. Although the winter solstice is on December 21 or 22, the coldest days in a year are usually in January.
7. In the Northern Hemisphere, the Earth is actually the closest to the sun in January.
8. Winter on Uranus lasts for 21 years.
9. Thunder occurring during a snowstorm is called thundersnow.
10. In Antarctica, researchers and other people have to remember the 30-30-30 rule: When the temperature is -30° F and the wind is at 30 MPH, human skin freezes in 30 seconds.
11. Sound travels slower in the winter than the summer.
12. One inch of snow makes about 1/10 of an inch of water.

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/89881/15-surprising-facts-about-winter-weather/>

<https://www.madewithhappy.com/facts-about-winter/>

<https://abc7chicago.com/snowflakes-all-different-what-color-is-snow-forecast-weather/1600701/>

Winter Break Book Recommendations

By Kylie Deng, Catherine Lei, and Elizabeth Guan

The February winter break is something students, teachers, and staff here at North Middle School are passionately anticipating. Spending time with family, watching new shows, catching up on work, going to town, and getting full nights of sleep are some of the most frequent activities both students and staff have on their mental to-do lists. However, many are seeking other options besides bingeing the latest Netflix series at midnight for the entirety of the break. Below are some book recommendations that we have compiled for your next novel:

1. Willa of the Wood by Robert Beatty

A captivating tale of a young Faeran girl trying her hardest to preserve the ancient culture of her tribe as new settlers without a care for the forest that old Faerans love and coexist with. What will happen when one of the only Faerans that still believe in the old ways meets a new settler who hasn't the faintest clue about what the forest says?

2. Scythe by Neal Shusterman

Scythe is a thought-evoking, perspective expanding novel written in three alter-changing perspectives. The plot follows two young adults — Citra Terranova and Rowan Damsich — who are one day plucked from their quotidian, high school lives and placed into the controversial world of scythes, the death gleaners. Will they both be able to outlive and pass the constant tests and become the next generation of high society figures, or will they both crumble under the weight of this new society?

3. Storm Runner Series by Rick Riordan

A story placed in a world where ancient Mayan gods are real and living. Meet Zane Obispo, a teenager who just moved to a remote island to attend a strict, religious school. He's bullied for his "runt" leg, only to realize that is his power... As the son of a Mayan god, it is his and his friends' job to prevent the outbreak of an inter-god war with his newfound power. Can the teenagers work together to somehow resolve an all-out war?

4. Ascendance Series by Jennifer A. Nelson

Mysterious disappearance. Royal death. Betrayal. This novel set in the 1400s takes the reader on a journey where several boys are stripped from their homes — or orphanages — and are forced to compete against each other for some ambiguous goal that when revealed, will change the lives of these children forever. Will these boys be able to step up for the greater good of the country?

5. The Girl Who Drank The Moon by Kelly Barnhill

This fantasy novel dives into a world of magic, mystery, and betrayal. A young mother is forced to sacrifice her baby to appease the Witch of the Swamp by her own people, in hopes to stop the witch from wreaking havoc upon their quaint village each year. But little do they know, the witch is a kind soul and saves a child every year. This year, she accidentally feeds one moonlight instead of starlight, causing her to develop strange powers. In the village, a young man whose own child is on the line rallies the village to kill the witch in an effort to save his newborn. The mother now sits in an asylum tower, mourning her child. But little do they all know, an evil far greater than they ever knew is brewing deep within the Bog, one that could end everything they ever knew.

6. Ballad of the Songbird and Snakes by Suzanne Collins

A thrilling prequel that extends before Katniss Everdeen or Peeta Mellark came into existence. Following young Coriolanus Snow who has been struggling in the Capital, the book depicts Snow's personal experience as a mentor in the Games and how he manages his tribute throughout the Hunger Games. Will Snow come on top? Or will his performance, future, and everything he's worked for crumble at the pressure?

7. A Good Girl's Guide to Murder by Holly Jackson

Only Pippa Fitz-Amobi can turn a school project into a full on investigative case on the mysterious murder of Andie Bell and the suicidal death of Sal Singh. Four years ago, the police declared that Sal murdered Andie, his girlfriend, and then took his own life, unable to bear the pressure. But Pippa isn't ready to give in. Why? Because it doesn't make sense. Nothing does. Till Pippa navigates through the twisted murder with the help of her detective instinct, the Singh family shall live in shame, shamed by society for their murderous (?) son.

Entertainment Pages

Reviews, Fashion, Trends & MORE (cont'd)

The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes: A Comparison

By Kylie Deng, Elizabeth Guan, and Catherine Lei
(Beware of spoilers with *)

The Movie

The long-awaited live action prequel to the Hunger Games, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes* is an intricately crafted romance and thriller all in one. With eerily beautiful soundtracks and sets that look like they're straight from a fantasy, this film was a wonder to watch. However, we still have little details to nitpick in this nearly three hour long work of art.

The camera angles in this movie were slightly inconsistent, which may be a turn-off for some. In a wonderful adrenaline packed explosion scene, the camera pans beautifully in a circle around Coriolanus Snow, the main character, and successfully captures the entirety of the gorgeous arena. Yet in another scene, the camera shoots an intimate scene between Snow and Lucy Gray Baird from *behind* Snow's arm, effectively giving him an unproportionately large elbow. However, the lighting in scenes are enough to make up for the angles, as they always convey the mood perfectly.

On the other hand, the actors chosen for this film did an absolutely fantastic job portraying the complicated characters depicted in Suzanne Collins' original novel. Snow's facial expressions specifically were a perfect way to show the audience how he felt while adding the perfect amount of suspense— "*Why does he look so determined? What's he going to do?*" And of course, Lucy Gray and her siren-like viral vocals. Her songs (more on those later) couldn't have been sung by a more suiting voice. Her voice is rich, smooth, and nearly intoxicating with the incredible melodies.

The soundtrack. Not only were the melodies and lyrics of Lucy Gray's songs wonderful, but the often overlooked background strings provided the perfect mood and tone for each scene. *From the intense instrumentals during the Games to the sad ones when Snow loses Lucy Gray, this soundtrack fits the majestic set perfectly.* But to dive even deeper, we need to look at some of the lyrics, specifically in "Hanging Tree". This song foreshadows the entire film in an impossibly clever way providing the audience with hints they didn't even know they got, as well as an amazing "Aha!" moment when you understand the lyrics after the movie.

Usually with a movie this good, we would wish for an even longer film. But unexpectedly, it feels a bit dragged out towards the end and becomes less interesting. But that did mean we had a more than adequate build up for the iconic ending. *Spoiler— the movie doesn't really tell you what ends up happening, leaving it up to the audience's imagination.* All in all, the production of this film made it immersive and quite easy on the eyes.

In Comparison to the Book

The irresistible question that everyone is asking: *How similar is the book compared to the movie?* After deep analysis, we have found an answer. Although there were minor changes between the book and the movie such as the length of certain character's backstory, the movie adaptation shared the majority of the same plot originally crafted by Collins. Obviously, many of Coriolanus Snow's inner motives, opinions, and thoughts couldn't be included in the Action Movie of the Year winning film but that didn't stop the movie from gaining 338.1 million USD in the box office.

Many small, yet iconic details were taken out of the movie whether it was because they were seen as unimportant or for the sake of keeping the runtime low. For example, in the book, Coriolanus Snow was pricked by Grandma'am's rose as she nimbly tried to attach it to his velvet school uniform. Snow was also consciously aware that his performance as a mentor in the Games was going to decide his future while in the movie, this announcement wasn't given until the Reaping Day. We believe this is because the producers wanted to generate a more thrilling experience as the viewers learn along with the characters. Snow and Lucy Gray Baird also flirted more in the book with one prominent line where Snow is filling out an ice breaker form for Lucy and he asks " 'Married?' " and she answers 'Why? Are you asking? Because I think this could really work.' "

Entertainment Pages

Reviews, Fashion, Trends & MORE (cont'd)

Continued from page 20...

Scenes that lack Snow's inner thoughts include when he awaits the train holding the tributes and is forced to remember his father's great military service which supposedly enhanced their business legitimacy and genuinity. He reminisces about the devastating death of his father which ended the every so often trips to the train station his family would take to not only wait for the "great man" to return from the battlefield but to also showcase their pro-Capitol presence and enhance their public image - which in this dystopia is crucial.

Of course, the ending to the captivating story also is a major discussion amongst Hunger Games fans.

*In both versions, it is uncertain as to Lucy Gray's ending, as mentioned before. When Lucy slips away as eerily as she appeared, Snow shoots into the forest, mad and verging on insanity. There is a moment where a Lucy-looking-like figure trips, leaving her fate up to discussion. *Was she shot and killed by Snow's raging bullets? Or did she trip as she fled? Did she manage to escape?**

As mentioned before, the soundtrack of the 3 hour film largely contributes and adds to the mood that each well crafted scene evokes. As the book lacks Lucy Gray (played by Rachel Zegler)'s soothing, yet powerful voice that appears in the movie, the general story is conveyed smoothly and is warmly appreciated by many.

Which One is Better?

In our humble opinion, the movie cannot beat the magnificent work of Suzanne Collins, we still recommend you to see the movie. (Though we may be a bit biased since we generally prefer books over movies.) Some key points that made us love the book more than the screen adaptation was that the book was written in first person, allowing us to glimpse through Snow's lens and experience his emotions. On the other hand, the movie was in third person and compared to the book, was not as moving as the book was. (But you should definitely still watch the production; it's very well thought out.) In the book version, some scenes were more emotional than depicted in the movie, such as when Snow sees a man eating someone else's leg in desperation. Movies can't exactly capture the moments like those like books do. That memory was forever ingrained into Coriolanus's head, and you, the reader, feels Coryo's own fear and realization that his family situation isn't that far off from the poor on the streets.

The book also describes Snow's family life and the pressures to keep up the Snow prestige better than the movie does. In the books, the opening chapter emphasizes the high end appearance that Snow is pressured to maintain even after his family fell deep into poverty. The pressure is built onto him from legacies of his predecessors, so that the slightest misstep can cause his family to be exiled from the Capitol, to be deemed unworthy of such luxury. Meanwhile, in the movie these struggles were slightly overlooked, one example being how the Plinth Prize would save Snow's family from debt and allow him to get into a college he'd otherwise never afford. Additionally, Snow's character development was more clear in the book than it was in the movie. As talked about before, the book was written in first person, so you, the reader, get to see Snow's dilemma and insecurities that change his ultimate character.

In the final moments before Snow's decision, he feels like everyone he's known has betrayed him in some way shape or form. *As you read, the reader sees his paranoia build up layer upon layer. So when Lucy Gray suddenly disappears into the woods, you understand the reason for Snow's extreme decision to kill her, while in the movie, it's a lot less clear why the sudden change in character. That was just the tipping point in his character arc, the point in time that sends him spiraling back into Capitol life and changes him into the Coriolanus Snow we know from the *Hunger Games*.*

In conclusion, both adaptations of *The Ballad of the Songbird and Snakes* by author Suzanne Collins and movie producer Francis Lawrence were immersive, riveting, and entertaining, but the one that stood out the most to us was the book. Both versions were written to near perfection, but the movie just could not outdo the book. Some scenes just couldn't make the final cut of the film, which is completely valid since screenplays have a time limit, but those little moments in the book that the movie missed are still wonderful. Finally, the first person perspective in the book allows the reader to understand Snow's actions better than the movie did. Even if it didn't beat the book, the movie was still amazing, and you should definitely watch it. Ten out of ten, would recommend.

Creator's Corner

“It’s Not Summer, Nor Fall, Neither Spring”

By Catherine Wang

It’s November,
And it’s a Friday -
Not a chilling one,
Though I know the lack of cold won’t last.

As it turns, it is now another Friday -
And the metallic grate, bars the embers -
Of my blaze’s soul.
The marrow is warm enough with blaze’s sparks in sight,
For my blaze is bright and wouldn’t dare back down; not now.

Not when it is, so, simple:
Red for burns.
Orange for warmth.
Yellow for light.

The cool,
The chill,
The cold,
All gone from here, but,

It is still winter for it isn’t August, Nor October, Neither April,
It is half-way deep in December,
And the frost continues to build; and then break.

“Untitled”

By Paige Klein

Winter in the air
There, in the frost of the trees
In the crackle of the footsteps
In the whispers of the wind
It feeds on darkness and frost-bitten cold
Hardened by the past, it
Crashes like hail and howls like the wind
Yet
It
Murmurs hope through the gentle fall of flurries, and
Warms you from the inside out, like a steaming mug of cocoa
It blankets the world like snow,
Two-faced season of ice
Winter is in the air

Creator's Corner (cont'd)

Double Chocolate Cherry Cookies

By Paige Klein

As a huge fan of the winter holidays, I know they aren't complete without some delicious food! So, here's a recipe that my family makes every year. It's hardly the holiday season without it...

Double Chocolate Cherry Cookies!

You'll Need...

- ½ cup butter, softened
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 ½ cups all purpose flour
- ⅔ cup cocoa powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons cherry juice (from maraschino cherry jar)
- 30-36 jarred maraschino cherries
- ¼ cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons sweetened condensed milk
- 1 tablespoon cherry juice (from maraschino cherry jar) (separate)

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F
2. Cream butter, sugar, and brown sugar with a mixer. Add and mix in one egg at a time.
3. Combine dry ingredients (flour, cocoa, salt, baking powder, and baking soda) in a medium bowl. Add ½ cup of the dry mixture to the butter mixture at a time. Blend after each addition until combined and be sure to scrape down the sides of the mixer bowl. Add the vanilla extract and 2 teaspoons of cherry juice and mix until just combined, then remove the bowl from the mixer. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
4. Butter hands and roll dough into 1-inch balls. Place on a parchment paper-covered cookie sheet. Use your thumb to press a small indentation into the center of each cookie, then place a cherry in the center.
5. Bake for 10 minutes.
6. On low, melt chocolate chips and sweetened condensed milk. Once melted, add 1 tablespoon of cherry juice, then drizzle over cooled cookies.

I hope you enjoy these cookies and they become as special to you as they are to me!

Source:

<https://www.smalltownwoman.com/double-chocolate-cherry-cookies/#tasty-recipes-20589-jump-target>



NMS Boys Basketball

By Derek Gao

The 23-24 NMS boys basketball season had many ups and downs. Both teams gave it their all and even through sickness, injuries, and other complications, both the 7th and 8th grade teams finished the season 7-4. Both teams started off rough with a 1-2 record. The 8th graders lost in 2 nail biters at home against Garden City and Weber, as the 7th graders beat Garden City, but lost to Manhasset in overtime and lost to Weber in a blowout.

However, both teams faced adversity and went on a winning streak. In the 8th graders' final game of the season, it was a very close game against North Shore, but great team playing gave the 8th graders a win in their final game of Middle School. This year showed the potential for both teams from a disappointing season last year. This was a great winter season for both teams and demonstrated incredible teamwork, friendship, and leadership to help players for high school.

NBA Season Updates

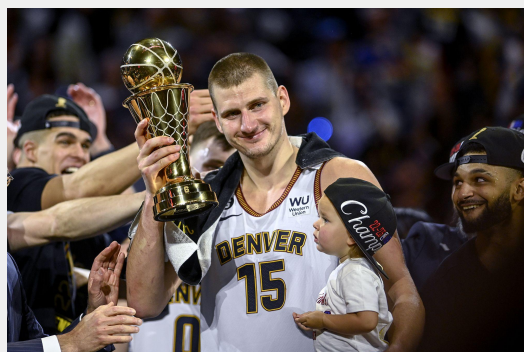
By Josiah Baires

Throughout the beginning of the in season tournament all the teams are battling to take home the first place trophy. Here are some details about how the season has been going so far!

The Indiana Pacers, the team that was voted to be better than the Hornets, leads the league in points per game. Their star player Tyrese Haliburton is averaging 20 points per game, 12.3 assists, and 5 rebounds per game. He also leads the league in assists per game with his amazing passing skills. Last year the team was one of the last place teams in the Eastern Conference, placing 11th in their division. They dominated the tournament, beating the Bucks who were voted to win the NBA finals. They lost to the Lakers but ended up in second place.

For rebounds per game, Nikola Jokic is one of the best if not the best player right now. He won the NBA Finals last season with the Denver Nuggets and got Finals MVP. With his amazing size, I guarantee he'll be grabbing every rebound coming his way.

Victor Wembanyama leads the league in blocks per game. He is the most hype prospect in 2023 since LeBron in 2003. He has the most blocks for a reason— his incredible height allows him to block anybody's shot. He is 7'4 which is enough to put center or small guards in their place, so they shouldn't try to size up on him. He is expected to be the future of the NBA because he has amazing skills on the court. For example, a lot of centers are not expected to make a lot of three pointers, but he is an automatic shooter from three.



Sports Pages (cont'd)

The NFL Final Four

By Noah Hourizadeh

It's Pro Bowl Weekend, and fans were in shock with the NFC and AFC Conference Championships. Both games were filled with excitement and fun, but in the end there was one game that stood out more than any other. The Detroit Lions vs San Francisco 49ers game was outstanding. People were cheering and at one point, there were people who turned off the television thinking that the game was over. At halftime, the score was 24-7 with the Detroit Lions leading the game majorly. However, by the end of the 3rd quarter, the 49ers caught up to make the score 24-24. Dan Campbell made some risky decisions including going for it on 4th down. This was an amazing game bringing Brock Purdy, who is also known as Mr. Irrelevant to the Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl started off slowly but didn't end as a boring game. In the first quarter, there were no points on the board. However, by halftime, the 49ers were leading 10-3. In the 3rd quarter, Harrison Butker buried a 57 yard field goal and Marquez Valdes-Scantling caught a touchdown pass. By the start of the 4th quarter, the Chiefs were leading the game 13-10. Juan Jennings then caught a touchdown pass and after a few exchanges of field goals, the game was sent to overtime. Even with the slow start to the most important game of the season, the two teams did not disappoint, bringing a show to all. The 49ers won the toss and were only able to hit a field goal. Patrick Mahomes knew what he had to do and won the Super Bowl by throwing a 3 yard pass to Mecole Hardman Jr.

Apart from the fact that the halftime show was not so great and Taylor Swift was shown around 12 times, it is safe to say that all fans had a great time this Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl

By Eliana Nejat

It's official! The Kansas City Chiefs overcame a 10-point deficit to become the first back to back Super Bowl champion in two decades as they defeated the San Francisco 49ers 25-22 in overtime in Super Bowl LVIII in Las Vegas.

In a back-and-forth affair, the two teams were tied at 19 at the end of regulation. Jake Moody made a 27-yard field goal in overtime to give the Niners a 22-19 lead. But Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes, as he has so many times before, drove the Chiefs down the field, and with 13 seconds left in overtime, connected with receiver Mecole Hardman on a one-yard touchdown pass to give the Chiefs their third Super Bowl in the past five seasons. Can't wait to see what happens next season!

